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No New Thing.

CHAPTER XXIII.  
PHILIP AT FLORENCE.



HERE are people who would rather admit any imputation in the world than that of being favoured by Fortune; people who, if told they are looking well, will remind you reproachfully that they had a very bad cold in the head the week before last; people who grumble at coming into a fortune because of the payment of legacy duty entailed thereby, and who could not accept a first-class embassy or a seat in the Cabinet without sighing over the arduous duties attached to such posts.

But Philip, whatever his defects may have been, was not one of those ungracious and ungrateful specimens of humanity. He had always recognised the fact that his luck was exceptional; and his first reflection, on waking out of the short sleep into which he had fallen towards morning was an acknowledgment that in the present instance, as in

so many previous ones, the stars in their courses were fighting for him. Characteristically enough, he was less struck by the strange turn of fortune which promised to change him from a penniless nobody into a highly respectable landed proprietor than by a concurrence of circumstances which seemed likely to render the task of investigation natural and easy. Of all cities in Europe Florence was the one to which he could betake himself at this time with the least fear of exciting remark or suspicion. In the ordinary course of things he would most likely have moved thither before the autumn; and latterly both Mr. Brune and Margaret had been hinting to him that he ought not to lose time in bringing the period of his musical education to an end. Herr Steinberger, too, who had not approved very cordially of the Italian plan, would probably prefer that his pupil should take leave of absence during the busy time of the London season than later in the year. He could, in short, go where he wanted to go, and at the same time tell the literal truth as to his destination—which was something of an unwonted luxury for him. He had quite made up his mind that the mystery should be solved, if by any means he could solve it; and really the solution did not seem likely to present any difficulties whatever.

After breakfast, therefore, Margaret was led out into the garden, and was informed that Philip proposed to hasten the fulfilment of his programme by a few months. "Everybody says that May is the time for Florence," he remarked; "and I suppose, if one wants to get all the good one can out of a place, one should take it at its best. That old Signora Tommasini whom I told you about will be there soon, and will give me introductions that may be useful to me. Moreover, it is high time for me to be setting to work again, Meg. Capua is very delightful, but stern duty seems to motion me towards Tuscany."

"Capua! where is that?" asked Margaret, who had not the educational advantages enjoyed by the young women of the present day.

"It is within sight of the towers of Crayminster cathedral," answered Philip; "and it is a dangerous residence for lazy people who like being spoilt. It isn't everybody who appreciates it at its proper value, though. I don't believe you care a straw for this dear old place, Meg; you would go off and leave it to-morrow without a single regret."

"Oh, no; indeed I should not!" said Margaret. "It has taken me a great many years to get fond of Longbourne; but I am very fond of it now, and of all its associations. I leave home so seldom, too, that I have become like a limpet on a rock, and I should feel utterly lost if I were dragged off it, and thrown out into the world again."

This was not at all the kind of reply that Philip had wished and expected to receive. He made haste to change the subject. "By the way, Meg," said he, "didn't you tell me once that my father and mother were married at Florence?"

Margaret threw a quick glance of apprehension at him. "I think

so," she answered; "I think it was at Florence; but it is so long since I was told about it that I cannot be quite sure."

The truth was that she was far from feeling as certain as she had once done that this marriage had ever been solemnised at all. The improbability of Countess Marescalchi's story had become more apparent to her with the lapse of years; and from the same cause sundry little touches of sincerity about the dying woman's utterances, which had carried conviction to Margaret's mind at the time, had lost distinctness. Philip had not alluded to his father or mother half-a-dozen times in the last ten years, and she was sorry that it should have occurred to him now to make inquiries about what might prove to be undiscoverable.

"Being in the place, I should rather like to see the church where they were married. It seems odd to know so little about one's parents," Philip went on. "I suppose you don't remember the name of the church, Meg?"

Margaret shook her head, and looked rather shamefaced. It struck her for the first time that she had hardly done her duty towards the unfortunate woman whose child she had appropriated. In her anxiety to treat Philip in all respects as her own son, she had forgotten a little what her wishes would have been, had she been in the situation of poor Countess Marescalchi, and had taken no pains to keep the mother alive in the memory of the *bambino* whom she had so loved.

"I don't think I ever heard the name of the church," Margaret answered. "Indeed, I almost sure I never did. I am afraid I have been very selfish, Philip," she added penitently. "I ought to have talked more about your mother to you; and I am sure you must often have wanted to know about her. Why did you never ask me before?"

Philip suddenly burst out laughing, and then as suddenly checked himself, turning his head away for a moment. If there was a person in the world whom he loved, it was Margaret; he never deceived her without a greater or less degree of pain; and the contrast between the true cause of his inquiries and that to which she attributed them had flashed vividly across his mind, as his impressions always did, and had faded away, leaving the echo of that inappropriate laugh as the trace of its passage.

"Why do you laugh?" asked Margaret.

"I don't know. I don't believe in instinctive affection, do you? How can one really care for a person whom one hardly recollects? You are my real mother, Meg; and as for my father, I have small reason to revere his memory, by all accounts. I should like just to know who he was, though. One feels a little pardonable curiosity upon such points."

"Yes," agreed Margaret, with some hesitation; "but I should hope—I should think, at least—that he must be dead. I have your uncle Signor Cavestri's address in Florence somewhere, and I can give it you, if you like. That is, I have what was his address twelve years ago: I have never heard a word of or from him since."

"Give me the address, Meg, and I'll look the old fellow up. Perhaps he may know something; and, if he doesn't, it can't be helped."

"I almost hope he may not," said Margaret.

Philip was not prepared to go quite so far as that; but he offered the general observation that it was a queer world, to which Mrs. Stanniforth signified her assent; and with that the subject dropped.

A few days after this Philip set out for Italy, with the good wishes of all his friends to speed him on his way. Some of them drove down to Crayminster station to bid him farewell; and the last thing that Philip saw, as the train began to move, was Nellie, waving her hand and nodding to him, with the brightest of smiles upon her face.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Mr. Brune, as he turned to leave the platform. "My dear Nellie, may I be permitted to say hurrah?"

"You may say anything you like, papa," answered she, with due submission.

"Thank you, my dear. How I do dislike that young man!"

"Ah; but you would dislike anybody who wanted to marry me, wouldn't you?" said Nellie, taking her father's arm and giving it a squeeze.

"Well, well; perhaps so. I can't bear the sight of Marescalchi, I know. However, we've seen the last of him for the present, and long may it be before we see him again! It is my firm belief that you don't care a brass farthing for him, Nell."

And perhaps the very vehemence with which Miss Brune repelled this accusation may have confirmed her father in his opinion.

It is certain that Nellie did not shed any tears, and was in no way cast down by her lover's departure; nor, for that matter, was the lover himself cast down. Philip's powers of amusing and enjoying himself were quite unbounded; and the pleasure he got out of a railway journey from England to Florence was as great as the discomfort entailed thereby upon common mortals—which is saying a good deal. The odd types that he encountered among his fellow-travellers, the novelty of the scenes that flitted, like dissolving views, past the railway-carriage windows, the ever-increasing warmth of the sun and clearness of the atmosphere, as the express rushed southwards—all these, and a hundred other trifles, contributed to divert and exhilarate him. A fresh sensation awaited him after the passing of the frontier, namely, a vague and pleasant stirring of long-buried memories. Those sallow faces, those high-pitched voices, those unshaven chins, those stout and brilliantly-dressed ladies, had he not known them all in some previous state of existence? The mulberry-trees, the maize-fields, the trailing vines, the ragged beggars who loitered and whined outside the railings of wayside stations, were not all these familiar, and yet strange, to him? Even certain faint odours, in which garlic and bad tobacco had a large share, seemed to recall shadowy experiences through which somebody had once passed. Philip really could not have sworn that he had passed through them



himself. He felt half inclined to shake hands with the people who got into the railway carriage; for surely they were all old friends, though their names had somehow escaped him. He studied their features with a puzzled smile; whereupon they smiled back, as Italians are always ready to do, and promptly entered into conversation. Philip had some knowledge of Italian, and his quick ear soon picked up the intonation of that easiest of tongues: perhaps, too, memory came to his aid again here. He managed to make himself agreeable; he scraped acquaintance with various entertaining persons; and so arrived at his destination at length, not at all tired, in a very cheerful frame of mind, and without having troubled his head once in the course of his journey about its object.

But when he had established himself comfortably in an hotel overlooking the Arno, and had had a bath and an ample breakfast and a cigar, he began to think it was time to attend to business, and, strolling out into the sunshine, inquired his way to the Via di San Giorgio.

The directions that he received were not very precise, and he had some little difficulty in following them; but he was in no hurry. He spent a very agreeable hour in admiring Giotto's Campanile, in loitering down the sunny side of broad thoroughfares, in staring in at shop-windows, and in exploring a network of narrow byways. At length, more by chance than intention, he hit off the street of which he was in search, and, drawing a slip of paper from his pocket, compared the address inscribed upon it with the number of the house before him. "Via di San Giorgio, No. 34, *terzo piano*." Here, sure enough, was No. 34; and a very dismal and poverty-stricken habitation it looked. As Philip climbed the dirty stone staircase, he had leisure to reflect that an uncle who lived in such quarters would be a very likely sort of uncle to make demands upon the purse of a nephew possessed of landed property; but parsimony had never been one of Philip's vices, and he said to himself that, if things turned out well, some sort of provision should be made for this needy relative. It presently appeared, however, that Signor Cavestri was no longer in a position to request or require human aid.

"Signor Cavestri!" cried the dishevelled servant-of-all-work who answered Philip's ring. "Eh! signore." And she raised her right hand and suddenly allowed her head to drop upon it sideways, as if it would roll off her shoulders.

Philip had never seen this gesture employed before; but its meaning required no explanation. "Do you mean to say that Signor Cavestri is dead?" he asked in some dismay.

"*E morto—è morto—sì!*" answered the woman, nodding a great many times, in apparent determination that there should be no mistake as to the fact of her late master's demise; and she went on to state that it was three years and more since he had been laid to rest, and to give some particulars of his last illness, to which Philip paid little attention.

"What a bother!" he muttered. Then he said aloud: "I regret this exceedingly. I have come all the way from England to see Signor Cavestri upon a matter of business which I had hoped might prove advantageous to him. Do you know whether any relations of his are living in Florence?"

"*Sicuro!* His daughter, the Signora Bonera, and her family inhabit the floor upon which your Excellency is standing," replied the woman, upon whom Philip's well-to-do appearance had not failed to produce some effect. "With permission, I will go and call the signora."

But, before Philip could make any answer, a third person had come to the front, in the shape of an obese, dark-haired lady in a rather dirty-white dressing-gown, who may perhaps have overheard the previous colloquy.

"I am the Signora Bonera," quoth she, with a sweeping curtsey and a fascinating smile. "*Favòrisca, signore.*" And she led the way into a scantily-furnished and carpetless sitting-room, and requested the stranger to do her the honour to sit down.

"So you are my cousin!" thought Philip, as he seated himself with precaution upon a decrepid arm-chair; "and you have got a family, and be hanged to you! All things considered, my dear cousin, I shall not reveal my identity to you until I am obliged."

He therefore made known the nature of his errand with much circumlocution and a great deal of pretended difficulty in expressing himself in Italian. Signora Bonera became immensely interested and excited when she heard what it was that had brought the stranger to Florence; she was very inquisitive and asked numberless questions; but the greater part of these Philip affected not to understand. He soon found out that she was not likely to be of any assistance to him, and that she knew little or nothing beyond the fact that her aunt had been married to a wealthy Englishman, who had deserted her.

"But," said she, "my uncle Filippo, who lives at Bologna, would be able to furnish you with every particular. He was at the marriage himself, as I have often heard him tell, and he can prove, if that is what is wanted, that it was a good marriage. I will write to him this evening, and beg him to come here and meet you. *Lo zio* is growing an old man—and there is the cost of the journey. But doubtless the signora has the means——"

An expressive pause seemed to call for some rejoinder from Philip, who bowed and said there would be no difficulty on the score of legitimate expenses.

"I will write by the very next post," cried the Signora Bonera. "And what name shall I have the pleasure of mentioning to my uncle?" she asked insinuatingly.

Philip declared that he could not think of putting the lady to so much trouble. Only let her oblige him with Signor Filippo Cavestri's address, and he would himself undertake the rest. This proposition did

not at all meet the views of Signora Bonera, who pointed out that it would be a great deal easier for her than for her interlocutor to compose an Italian letter; but Philip said he had no doubt he should be able to make himself intelligible with the help of a dictionary. Thereupon a long and lively debate ensued; but in the end Philip carried his point, and escaped without having given his name. He promised to call again before long, at the same time throwing out some pacifying hints as to a possible change in the fortunes of the Cavestri family, and so made his way out into the air and sunshine again, not ill pleased, upon the whole, with the result of his afternoon's work. It would have been more convenient, and probably less expensive, to have had to deal with one person than with a whole family, and he could have wished that his cousin had been a rather more presentable individual; still, he reflected, it might have been worse. These people were evidently too poor to be very troublesome, and it was a far cry from Longbourne to Florence. Taking everything into consideration, he was inclined to put down the whole Cavestri clan at an annual expenditure of from three to four hundred pounds; and really they would be cheap at the money, if they could supply him with the information that he wanted.

When he returned to his hotel the sun, sloping towards the west, was flooding the Lung Arno with mellow light, and illumining, among other persons and things, a very smart landau, which was waiting at the door. Philip was indulging in a moment's idle curiosity as to who the owner of this showy equipage might be, when the porter hurried out, cap in hand, to hold open the door. Then came the swish of voluminous skirts; a shrill exclamation rang through Philip's head, and immediately both his hands were being grasped in the tightly-gloved ones of Signora Tommasini.

"You, of all people in the world!" she exclaimed. "Well, I am glad! I had really begun to think I was never to see you again."

"Nor your 5,000*l.* either," thought Philip. And simultaneously it occurred to him that, if he should indeed prove to be the heir of Longbourne, this and other debts might be discharged within no very long space of time. This enabled him to welcome Signora Tommasini with less of mental reserve than he might otherwise have done.

"You can't be more glad than I am," he answered. "You are more surprised, I dare say, because I fully expected to meet you here, and have been looking forward to doing so for a long time."

"Have you? I don't believe you a bit; but it is polite of you to say that. Why have you never written to me? Are you staying in this hotel? Are you really going to study here?" went on the Signora, asking questions with her usual volubility, and pausing for no answers. "Come for a drive with me. I am going to the Cascine, where it is delicious at this hour, and where you will meet all the world. I am singing at the Opera here, you know, and am received *tant bien que mal*. But I don't like these Florentines; they are very different from my good

English public. They are cold ; they are critical ; they make no allowance for a poor old woman with a cracked voice, who is doing her best to please them. Ah, well, every dog has his day. The Florentines would adore you ; they love a handsome face as much as a sweet voice. You ought to make your *début* here. But I suppose old Steinberger would object to that. Not that you would ever be able to make yourself heard beyond such an orchestra. The public taste is becoming ruined in Italy, as it is everywhere else. In old days they loved singing ; now they only care for noise. I was singing in *Don Carlos* last night, and they insisted on having the march three times, the idiots ! All that is rather a help to old stagers, like myself, who don't mind a hubbub which covers deficiencies ; but it would be fatal to you. Where have you been since you left London ? Down in the country all this time ? I thought you hated the country. Give an account of yourself and of all that you have been doing."

"I will, if you'll let me get in a word," answered Philip, laughing.

He had been seated in the landau beside Signora Tommasini long before this, and they were within the gates of the Cascine by the time that she had ceased speaking. The carriage had fallen into a line of others, which were proceeding at a snail's pace along the shady drive, meeting a stream of returning vehicles, some shabby, some resplendent, all, or nearly all, badly horsed. Many hats were raised and many hands waved to the popular *prima donna*, who acknowledged these greetings with a bow from her waist to the ladies, a bob of her head for the men, and a broad, good-humoured smile for everybody. Her time was so taken up with receiving and returning salutations that she could pay but little attention to her companion, and at last ordered the coachman to drive on to a more secluded part of the gardens.

"It is impossible to talk or to listen in this crowd," said she ; "and I want to talk to you, or rather to hear you talk." And when the fashionable world of Florence had been left behind, the Signora proposed that they should get out of the carriage and walk a little way. "I am obliged to take some exercise every day to keep down my fat," she said, with a laugh. "I haven't succeeded very well, you'll say ; but then there's no telling how much worse I might have been if I had been lazy. Now, what has brought you here ? Wasn't it rather a sudden resolution ?"

"I always talked, you know, of coming to Italy for a time," answered Philip ; "and it so happens that I have reasons for wishing to be in Florence just now, besides the desire to take a few lessons and to enjoy the pleasure of your society."

At that moment he felt a strong impulse to be candid with Signora Tommasini. Philip, like many other persons who habitually distrust their kind, was subject to irresistible leanings towards confidence in the case of certain individuals, and particularly of such as he thought likely to prove of service to him. Signora Tommasini was emphatically one

of these. He knew that her affection for him was sincere; he had found her also to be a shrewder woman than was generally supposed, and he had a notion that shrewdness might be a very necessary quality in dealings with the Cavestri family. Added to this, he was naturally anxious to let the Signora know that there was so fair a probability of her 5,000*l.* being handed back to her before she was much older. Such being his state of mind, it may well be supposed that within the space of about half an hour the Signora knew all that there was to know about her friend's parentage and adoption, and about the flattering tale which Hope and Mrs. Prosser had whispered in his ear. She would have been in possession of the facts a great deal sooner if she had not interrupted the beginning of the recital by many queries and ejaculations, and if she had not stopped Philip to scold him roundly for five minutes when he alluded to the prospect of his being able soon to refund the advance which she had so kindly made to him. But after that she became more and more grave and silent, and her final comment upon what she had heard was the unexpected one of "Well, it is a great pity."

Philip looked at her, looked up at the sky, looked around him at the trees on either side of the shady alley along which they were pacing, and, spreading out his hands with a gesture of patient expostulation, addressed himself to space. "Now, did you ever—I ask you, *did* you ever—hear anything like that? I have seen something of women; I have lived amongst them more than most men do, and I flattered myself that I understood the queer nature of them to some extent; but after this I give the subject up, it beats me altogether. Oh, it's Balak and Balaam over again, you know. I bring her out here to congratulate me, and behold, she puts on a long face, and says it's a pity! Now, I should like to know why it is a pity. In what possible way can it be a pity?"

"It seems to me," answered the Signora, "that it is a pity in every way. The story will turn out to be true, I'm afraid; and I tell you frankly that I'm very sorry for it. I had had great hopes of you. With labour and patience I do believe that you would have become a famous singer some day; and I am quite certain that the life of a famous singer would have been the one above all others to make you happy. You will not be happy at all as a country gentleman with a limited income, and you will go to the bad, most likely, for want of something to do and somebody to look after you. More than that, I think it is a pity—we are friends, you know, and you mustn't be angry if I speak my mind—I think it is a pity that you should be turning the lady who has been the making of you out of house and home."

Philip was not easily offended; but this outspoken censure touched him in a sore place, and the blood mounted to his forehead as he answered, "That is a very unfair way of putting it. It is true that Mrs. Stanniforth may have to leave Longbourne; but is that any fault

of mine? She won't be a penny the poorer, remember, and all that she will lose will be the house. And let me tell you that, if you knew her, you would be aware that she is the very last person in the world to grudge me a piece of good fortune."

"Then why didn't you tell her what you were coming here for?"

"What would have been the use of troubling her, when I knew nothing for certain? Besides, I promised Prosser that I wouldn't say a word to any one."

"I don't care a snap for that malignant old hag of a housekeeper; and you don't care a snap for your promise. You have broken it already in telling me; break it again, and write to Mrs. Stanniforth by to-night's mail."

"My dear Signora Tommasini, I have the most sincere respect for your opinion; but I do think I may be the best judge of what ought to be my conduct towards Mrs. Stanniforth."

"Well may you say that you don't understand women!" cried the Signora with some impatience. "Oh, you foolish fellow! can't you understand such a simple thing as this?—that Mrs. Stanniforth would forgive you for turning her out of her home, or even for taking her purse out of her pocket; but that she will never quite forgive you for deceiving her. You have made a very stupid mistake as it is; but you may undo it partly, if you write by to-night's post and explain everything. She will think you found writing more easy than speaking; many people do. Come along back to the carriage; we haven't a minute to lose."

And this energetic lady caught Philip by the arm, and hurried him away, paying no heed to his protests.

"You are quite wrong," he said. "She'll tell her mother, and then there'll be the deuce to pay. And a pretty fool I shall look if the whole thing turns out a myth."

"Stuff and nonsense!" returned the Signora; "she won't tell anybody; and if she does, it is better to look like a fool than like something else. Don't you play fast and loose with your best friends. You can't afford it, I tell you."

All the way back to Florence the Signora lectured and Philip argued; but the end of it was that he did write the letter, as he was bid, and posted it at the same time with one addressed to Signor Cavestri at Bologna.

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#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS.

THE Post Office, as brought to its present state of efficiency, is doubtless one of the glories of the age and an institution for which everybody ought to be thankful. That the facilities for speedy communication



afforded by it give us all an immensity of needless worry is, however, indisputable; and this chapter will show how a mighty pother was brought about among one set of insignificant people by the postal machinery during the space of a single short week.

Possibly things might have fallen out differently but for the accident of Philip's having chosen to leave Longbourne for Italy on a Monday; which was the day invariably set apart by Mrs. Stanniforth for the despatch of that weekly budget to Shorncliffe which has been already more than once referred to. For several past Mondays Margaret had contrived, with no small difficulty, to keep her own counsel upon the subject which chiefly engrossed her thoughts; for she had felt certain that Hugh would consider the engagement between Philip and Nellie an imprudent one, and would say so; and she had heard this said so many times already that it seemed almost better to hold her peace altogether than to expose herself to a repetition of it from a fresh quarter. But on this especial Monday, when all the agitation of leave-taking was still upon her, it was inevitable that she should write about Philip, and scarcely less inevitable that, in writing about him, she should tell the whole truth. This was the conclusion to which she came, after tearing up three abortive attempts at mystery. Either she must disburden her soul, or Hugh must do without his letter. Her own inclinations and regard for the feelings of her friend alike urged her to adopt the former alternative; and accordingly she did adopt it—with a result which will have been foreseen by readers with good memories.

On the Wednesday morning Mrs. Winnington, sitting opposite to her daughter at the breakfast-table, and receiving a pat of butter in her tea, instead of a lump of sugar, formed the not unnatural conclusion that some news of a disquieting nature had reached the mistress of the house.

"Dearest Margaret," said she, when the above trifling mistake had been mentioned and rectified, "I trust you have not had any unpleasant letters."

"Nearly all letters are unpleasant," answered Margaret, with a tremble in her voice and a very unsuccessful imitation of a laugh. She added something incoherent about business letters and begging letters, and laid down the one which she had been perusing.

But as soon as her mother, who had a fine healthy appetite, had ceased to scrutinise her, she picked it up again and finished it, her face growing paler and paler, as she read.

"My dear Margaret" (Hugh wrote),

"I can't tell you how astonished and grieved I was to hear by your letter of this morning that Marescalchi had engaged himself to Miss Brune. It is such a bad business that I hardly know how to tell you what is the real state of the case; and yet it is certain that you must be told. I wish with all my heart that I had not been such a fool as to conceal what I have known for the last three months; but I acted, as I



thought, for the best, never doubting but that the young fellow would confess it all to you himself, sooner or later. Latterly, indeed, I have fancied, from your never saying anything about him in your letters, that he had done so.

"It is useless to try and break these things gently : the miserable truth is that he is married already. Unfortunately, there is no room for the shadow of a doubt as to the fact. You may remember that you wrote to me in January last, asking me to go up to London and see Marescalchi, who, you feared, was in some trouble ; and it was then that I discovered that he was living in Conduit Street with his wife, to whom he must have been some time married, as there was a baby. I happened to see the whole three of them entering the house, and I am bound to say the young woman appeared to be a modest, respectable sort of person, though certainly not a lady. I hesitated to speak to Marescalchi at the time, as perhaps I ought to have done ; and when I was next able to call, I heard from the landlady of the lodgings that he and Mrs. Marescalchi were in great distress, owing to the sudden death of the child ; so that it was really impossible for me to intrude upon him. Had I had the smallest idea that he could be such a scoundrel as he evidently is, I should not have been so scrupulous. I need not say how much I have felt for you all this time ; and I may add that I have also wasted some good pity upon him. Poor little Miss Brune ! this is a sad beginning for her life.

"If I can be of any help to you in any way, you know that you can command me. I could get leave, if necessary, and a *journey to Italy* would be quite within my power. I dread to seem interfering and officious ; but there are emergencies in which a strong arm is a useful thing, and there are persons who understand no other argument.

"I am writing in some haste ; and, besides that, I thought you would rather I said what I had to say as briefly as possible ; but of course, if you wish it, I can give you fuller particulars. For the present I will only add that, if you can think of any way in which I can serve you, and will tell me of it, you will confer a true kindness upon

"Your affectionate friend,

"HUGH KENYON."

There were certain passages in this letter which were scarcely judicious, and the whole composition was pervaded by a subdued "didn't I tell you so?" flavour which Margaret would certainly have noticed and resented, had its subject-matter been less appalling. As it was, she could only repeat to herself, "This is not true. I can't believe it. Hugh must have made some mistake." But there was very little comfort to be got out of telling herself that she couldn't believe it, when she knew all the time that she could, and did. She read the letter over again, and was unable to discover any loophole for escape. There was no getting over the landlady's allusion to "Mrs. Marescalchi ;" nor was it conceivable

that Philip should have allowed any woman to pass as his wife, unless he had been really married to her. Margaret did not ask herself whether it was conceivable that Philip should contemplate bigamy. She had not yet had time to weigh probabilities, and was so stunned and bewildered that, if Mrs. Winnington had chosen to question her further, the whole story must infallibly have come out in the course of a few minutes.

It chanced, however, that Mrs. Winnington's mind was engaged with other matters at the moment. Mrs. Winnington had been reading letters of her own—letters from London—letters in which mention was made of balls and dinners and State concerts, and all the other unvarying incidents of that life for which her soul yearned. Mrs. Winnington had tasted these delights many a time and often, and for her assuredly there could be no new thing under the dim London sun; but as she was very far from desiring anything new, such philosophical reflections were powerless to console her, and it was with a profound and pathetic sigh that she restored her letters to their envelopes. Margaret did not appear to notice this signal of distress; so Mrs. Winnington sighed more loudly, and, again failing to attract attention, rose, walked to the other end of the table, and placing her hands affectionately on her daughter's shoulders, kissed her on the forehead.

"Dearest Margaret," said she, "you are looking very pale. Don't you think you ought to have a little change?"

"Oh, no," answered Margaret hastily; "I am perfectly well, and I hate going away from home. Longbourne suits me better than any other place in the world."

"My dear, are you sure of that? Constitutions differ, certainly; but I cannot help thinking it very unlikely that a place which invariably makes me ill after three weeks can agree with you all the year round."

"But it really does," answered Margaret, with provoking obtuseness.

Mrs. Winnington moved to the window, and looked out upon the terrace, where her younger daughter was to be seen walking up and down in the sunshine. "Poor Edith!" she murmured; "I do feel so very sorry for her, poor child!"

"Sorry for Edith?" repeated Margaret absently. "Why should you be sorry for her?"

"Oh, my dear," cried Mrs. Winnington with some asperity, "you are not the only person in the world who is to be pitied. Other people have their troubles too; and naturally, at Edith's age, it seems hard to be buried down in the country, when all her friends are enjoying themselves in town."

This direct appeal proved effectual. Margaret roused herself, got up, and joined her mother at the window. "How selfish of me never to have thought of that!" she exclaimed penitently. "Of course she ought to be in London, and so ought you. Do take her there at once; you must not hesitate about leaving me."

But Mrs. Winnington shook her head. "No," said she decisively; "I determined, once for all, last year, that I never would spend another season in London lodgings. To begin with, it is more than I can afford."

"But, mother——"

"Dearest Margaret, you are always so kind; and I know you would gladly help us out with our rent; but rent is really the least thing. There are carriages, and dresses, and flowers, and a hundred other necessities, which would swallow up the whole of my wretched little income in a few months. Besides which, living in lodgings is objectionable in every way. I felt it so very strongly last year, and I made up my mind that I would never do it again. If one wishes to hold up one's head in society at all, one must entertain. It need not be upon a large scale, and it need not cost much; but there is just the feeling, you know, that one can have a few people to dinner sometimes, and that one has a decent house to receive one's visitors in. I have thought very often lately that I have acted rather unfairly to Edith in remaining unsettled, year after year, as I have done. It is so difficult to see one's duty plainly! I believe now that what I ought to have done would have been to establish myself in a small house at the far end of Belgrave Road, or some other cheap place. It would have been very nasty; but it would have given her an opportunity of sometimes catching glimpses of civilisation. There is no help for it now, though. To hire a house in London for the season would be out of the question; and to lodgings I will not go. As I said to Lady Laura Smythe the other day, going into society in that sort of way is almost like living upon the charity of others—a thing I could never consent to do."

If Margaret did not answer immediately, it was because she was half afraid that it was not in her power to make the only answer that could be considered at all to the point. That a childless woman, with fifteen thousand a year and the simplest of personal tastes, should ever be in want of money may sound somewhat incredible; but it is said by those who ought to know that there are people with twice Mrs. Stanniforth's means who are not unacquainted with the pinch of poverty. However that may be, it is certain that Margaret was not, in the true sense of the word, rich. From various causes, which need not be entered into now, she was seldom able to keep a large balance at her bankers', and it has been shown before what excellent reasons she had for desiring to lay by a certain sum every year. Still, she felt that, if she remained long silent, her mother's delicate scruples would be aroused, and poor Edith would get no London season. Therefore she only hesitated a moment before declaring cheerfully that the London house ought to be her affair, and that she would give instructions about securing one forthwith.

Mrs. Winnington could not hear of such a thing. No! she knew too well how many people had claims—if you could call them claims—upon poor dear Margaret, and what it cost to provide young men with

unlimited travelling-expenses and the best singing-masters in Italy. No ! if dear Margaret had wished to take a house in London for *herself*, that would have been another thing ; but Mrs. Winnington could not accept, and would not accept, even from her own daughter—and so forth, and so forth, for ten minutes, without a break. In the course of these ten minutes it did, indeed, transpire that there was a small house in Park Street, belonging to a particular friend of Lady Laura Smythe's, which was now to be had ; but the rent asked for it was quite too ridiculous—which was a pity, as the situation and the very modest dimensions of the house might have made it suitable in other ways. " But," added Mrs. Winnington, " no doubt it will be snapped up at once. Lady Laura asked me to let her have a reply by return of post. So absurd of her ! As if I could possibly afford such an expense ! But I never can get people to understand that your purse is not mine."

The remainder of the argument need scarcely be chronicled. Of course Margaret protested that all that was hers was her mother's, and of course Mrs. Winnington pointed out that, however justifiable such a theory might be upon abstract grounds, it was impossible to make it fit in with the conditions of a sophisticated state of society. The generous dispute was a prolonged one ; but it was not so unduly prolonged as to prevent Mrs. Winnington from dashing off a few hasty lines to Lady Laura Smythe in time to catch the midday post.

Margaret breathed more freely as soon as this question was disposed of. In the impending catastrophe her mother's sympathies would not, as she well knew, be with her ; and it would be best for her to be alone when the terrible disclosure had to be made. It should not be made before an answer should have come from Philip : she had now so far recovered her scattered wits as to have decided upon that much. She would write to him, enclosing Hugh's letter, and she would not condemn him until he should have had an opportunity of giving his version of the story. Who knew but that he might be able to exculpate himself ? Even a prisoner who has been caught in the act of entering a dwelling-house by the area-window at midnight is held innocent until he has been proved guilty ; and was she not to extend the same measure of bare justice to poor Philip ? She had already begun to think of him as " poor Philip," it will be observed. Perhaps in his case, as in that of the supposititious burglar, it was upon the absence of " felonious intent " that she built her vain hopes.

But, as the day went on, it became more and more apparent to her that she could never live through the long interval of suspense that must take place before a reply could be received from Florence. This, she calculated, could not, at earliest, be before the fifth day ; and to exist in a state of torment through four mortal days and nights was an ordeal not to be faced, if by any means it could be avoided. She longed to telegraph, but could not see her way to doing so, consistently with prudence ; for Longbourne was not one of the houses where telegrams

are received and despatched so frequently as to give rise to no remark; and, besides that, it would be impossible to frame a message which should be at once intelligible to Philip and unintelligible to the clerks at the Crayminster post-office. It was while pondering the latter difficulty that Margaret thought of a very simple expedient for overcoming it. Why should she not word her telegram in a foreign language? The notion pleased her so much, and her desire to be put speedily out of her pain was so strong, that she resolved, at last, to run the risk; and in the course of the afternoon she set out to walk across the fields to Crayminster, and to write the momentous question with her own hand. She did not care to let the servants know that she was in such haste to communicate with Mr. Marescalchi, and she would not drive, for she knew that if she did so her mother would accompany her.

The young gentleman who snatched Mrs. Stanniforth's telegraph-form out of her hand—(Is it because postmen always have the gratuities of Christmas before their mind's eye, while post-office clerks have nothing connected with that season to look forward to, except an increase of labour, that the former are so subservient and the latter so outrageously offensive in their demeanour towards the public?)—this young gentleman was as satisfactorily puzzled as could have been wished. Margaret had written distinctly the following words in German, having had doubts as to the trustworthiness of French in this age of universal accomplishment: "Is it the case that you are not free to marry? Pray telegraph the exact truth. Hugh has been in Conduit Street." This message, after much preliminary frowning and muttering, was accepted and paid for; and when Margaret had asked three times at what hour it would be delivered, and had been answered at last by a curt, "Can't say, 'm shaw," she started on her homeward way.

It was a long up-hill walk, and the sun was hot and scorching, as it often is in the month of May. Margaret, weary in body and mind, had lost all thinking power, and, fortunately for herself, was unable to suffer in anticipation of a terrible future. Her one anxiety, then and throughout the remainder of the day, was that the reply to her telegram should reach her after her mother and sister had gone to bed. It would have puzzled her to give any account afterwards of the manner in which she had got through that interminable afternoon and evening. But somehow or other the time passed; and Fortune was very kind to her; for hardly had Mrs. Whnnington and Edith wished her good-night, and gone upstairs, than a ring at the front door brought her heart into her mouth; and a minute later she wished-for yellow envelope was in her hands.

She tore it open, devoured its contents, and then, covering her face with her hands, burst into tears of joy. Philip's answer was brief and to the point; and he had not thought it necessary to employ any language but his own. "All right. Free as air. Very natural mistake of Kenyon's. Will write about this and the other matter shortly."

It was very well to be thankful; but it was unfortunate, though not,

perhaps, very surprising, that Margaret's thankfulness should have been mingled with a strong feeling of wrath against the luckless Hugh Kenyon. "How like Hugh to jump to conclusions in that way!" she thought. "Hugh would believe anything bad of Philip; and he never considers what misery he inflicts upon me when he makes such cruel accusations."

This was, no doubt, extremely unjust, since Colonel Kenyon was about the last man in England to jump to conclusions, and certainly the last to inflict needless pain upon those whom he loved; but that he was ready to believe anything bad of Philip was true enough, and it was probably this predisposition which Margaret found it most hard to forgive. She sat down forthwith, and scribbled off a hasty letter, which would have gone near to breaking Hugh's heart if he had ever received it. But he never did receive it; for his correspondent, after relieving her feelings by saying some very cutting things, wisely tore up what she had written, and went to bed at peace with all mankind, forgiving her friends as well as her enemies.

It was not until the following morning that she began to wonder what might be that "other matter" to which Philip had made allusion; but it did not occur to her to attach any importance to the phrase. He might have intended to refer to his engagement to Nellie, or to his plans for remaining at Florence—most likely to the former. Thursday, therefore, was a day of rest and freedom from care for Margaret; but upon the Friday morning she found, beside her plate at breakfast-time, the letter which had been written at Signora Tommasini's instance, and which had been posted before the telegram from Longbourne had reached its destination. The substance of this letter astonished and perturbed Margaret a good deal; but it by no means filled her with consternation, as Colonel Kenyon's had done. Considering the haste with which it had been written, it was a not unskillfully worded epistle. It was—so Margaret thought—quite unnecessarily contrite in tone, and it explained to her full satisfaction Philip's previous silence. It was both natural and becoming that, upon the first blush of the thing, he should have held himself bound by his promise to Prosser, and it was a proof of his heart's being in the right place that, after more mature consideration, he should have found it impossible to keep any secret from herself. As to the main point, her sympathies and hopes were entirely upon the side of her adopted son. Most willingly would she retire from Longbourne to let him enter there as master, and most thankful would she be if the respectability of his birth could be proved beyond a doubt. Not having had time to contemplate possible side-issues, she was inclined to hail the news, so far as it went, as thoroughly good news.

"A letter from Florence?" asked Mrs. Winnington insinuatingly, across the table. "All well, I hope?"

"Philip has got over his journey safely," answered Margaret, with pardonable equivocation.



"So glad! Now, dearest Margaret, don't you think you might come up to London to us for a time? We would not keep you a day longer than you wished to stay; but I really believe you would enjoy yourself, when once you were there."

What reply Mrs. Stanniforth would have made to this kindly pressure to partake of her own hospitality will never be known; for at this moment Edith, who had been looking out of the window, turned round to say that one of the cows had got into the garden, and was eating up the roses.

"Oh!" exclaimed Margaret, and flew out on to the terrace, followed by her sister.

An exciting chase, subsequently joined in by two gardeners, ensued, and lasted for a matter of ten minutes, while Mrs. Winnington looked on from the window with a face of strong disapproval. It did not accord with her views of propriety that ladies should rush about and make themselves hot, when they had a large staff of retainers handsomely paid to do that for them. Such behaviour, she thought, lowered one in the eyes of one's inferiors, and encouraged them to take liberties. Possibly with a desire to spare herself the sight of so degrading a spectacle, she turned away, and began carelessly glancing at the letters which Margaret had imprudently left on the table. It has been said before that Mrs. Winnington's notions with regard to the sacredness of other people's letters were of a liberal order; and she did not for a moment hesitate to draw these from their envelopes. And so it came to pass that when Margaret returned—flushed and breathless, but triumphant—she found her mother extended rigidly upon her chair, with the soles of her feet well exposed to view, her head falling on to her shoulder, and her arms hanging helpless by her sides like those of a rag doll. What had happened was only too evident; and Margaret, for once, lost all control over her indignation.

"Really, mother," she exclaimed, "this is too bad! Why do you read my letters?"

"Oh, Margaret," answered Mrs. Winnington in a hollow voice, "do not—do not speak of such trifles at a moment like this! How you can scamper after cows, when you may be upon the brink of being turned out of your house, is more than I can comprehend. This is what one gets by adopting orphans and pampering them! But for your infatuation, this wretched boy might have died years ago."

"Nonsense, mother! it is not in the least certain that I shall be turned out of my house; and I don't care if I am. You ought not to have looked at my letter, and you have no business to know anything about this. The least that you can do now is to behave as if you knew nothing about it."

"Very well, my dear; if you think that is a proper way to speak to your mother, I can say no more. In my opinion, letters that are left open upon the table are as much public property as newspapers; and I



must say I should never have supposed you wished to conceal anything from me. Pray do not imagine that I shall interfere in the matter, directly or indirectly. It must be sifted, however," continued Mrs. Winnington, assuming a more erect attitude. "The woman Prosser must be sent for at once, and made to tell all that she knows."

"I cannot allow it!" exclaimed Margaret. "The secret is Philip's, not mine, and it would be most ungenerous in me to betray him. It would not do any good either; for, naturally, Prosser could tell us no more than she told him."

"It would do this good," answered Mrs. Winnington, "that it would set my mind at rest. I don't believe a word of this story, mind you—not a word of it! It might be easy enough for that woman to deceive a silly, vain boy; but she will not find it so easy to deceive me, I can tell her!"

The issue was inevitable. Mrs. Winnington had taken the bit between her teeth, and Margaret knew full well that argument would be thrown away upon her. Indeed, the good lady herself confessed as much. She was not going to interfere in any way, she said; but at the same time she could not blind herself to her plain duty. She could not sit still and allow a monstrous fraud to be concocted under her daughter's roof; and, in short, if the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain. In other words, Mrs. Winnington expressed her intention, in the last resort, of betaking herself to the housekeeper's room, and doing battle there.

As a choice of evils, therefore, Mrs. Prosser was summoned, and probably derived much satisfaction from the spectacle of her enemy's discomfiture. Mrs. Prosser, it need hardly be said, was victorious all along the line. Her evidence was not to be shaken by the most searching cross-examination; nor did she allow herself to be moved for one instant from the placid respectfulness of her bearing. Mrs. Winnington she ignored altogether, addressing her replies exclusively to Margaret, and, it must be confessed, producing a rather favourable impression upon the latter by her straightforwardness. When pressed to say why she had not told her story before, she answered that that was a matter "betwixt her and her conscience," and she must "decline for to enter upon it again." She had "already spoke to Mr. Philip upon the subject."

"It all seems to be the most preposterous rubbish!" cried Mrs. Winnington at length. "At all events, the question cannot be set at rest without a lawsuit; that is certain."

"I don't think, ma'am," observed Mrs. Prosser to Margaret, "as Mr. Neville would wish to go to law, if Mr. Philip's rights was proved to his satisfaction; and I believe there is nobody else who could do so."

"Of course there could be nobody else, Prosser," answered Margaret. "It is a pity, I think, that you did not speak sooner; but I quite believe all that you have told us. It does not prove anything——"

"Nothing at all, ma'am."

"Still, it may help us to find out the truth. You can go now, Prosser. For the present, I hope you will say no more about this to any one."

"If you remember, ma'am, my own wishes was that you should not be told yourself, as long as 'twas uncertain," replied Mrs. Prosser, scoring this final hit as she dropped a curtsey in the doorway. "If 'tis known far and wide before the week is out, 'twill not be through me, ma'am, you may depend."

#### CHAPTER XXV.

#### CONSULTATIONS.

MRS. PROSSER exceeded the limits of justifiable innuendo when she hinted that the disclosure which she had made would be known far and wide in the course of a week. Mrs. Winnington was not the woman to publish abroad anything that might hereafter tell to her own or her daughter's disadvantage; nor did she at all allude to the subject when paying a round of calls upon neighbours whom she could not refuse herself the pleasure of informing that she had taken a house in Park Street for the season. But, on the other hand, she talked of nothing else in the family circle. She soon made her peace with Margaret, remembering that something was due to one who had behaved with so much liberality in the matter of that Park Street house; and although she could not acknowledge that she had been guilty of any impropriety in reading Philip's letter, she went so far as to say that she was sorry for having done so, since Margaret's feelings had been hurt thereby. Margaret willingly accepted this apology, such as it was, apologised on her side for the hasty expressions which she had used in the heat of the moment, and only begged that the whole question might be suffered to remain in abeyance until further particulars should be forthcoming.

Mrs. Winnington said no doubt that would be best; that was exactly what she herself would advise; for what could be the good of discussing a story which would in all probability turn out to be false from beginning to end? After which, she went on to discuss it in all its bearings. In all such of its bearings, that is, as seemed likely to affect her own family; for it was with these alone that she troubled herself. Old Mr. Stanniforth would be none the worse off, whatever might happen; but Margaret was in danger of being deprived of her home without a halfpenny of compensation; and the truly grievous part of the business was that she would have in a manner created her own despoiler, since it was tolerably certain that Philip would never have been heard of in England but for her ill-judged charity. The good lady's thoughts were thus so engrossed that she quite overlooked the circumstance that the chief sufferer would be Mr. Brune, who would assuredly be called upon to refund the purchase-money of an

estate which had never been his to dispose of. When, however, Margaret drew her attention to this aspect of the affair, she admitted that the poor man's case was a hard one.

"And that," said she, "makes me the more anxious that you should consult him without loss of time. In fact, I think it would be hardly honest to keep him any longer in ignorance of his danger."

Margaret said that was not her feeling at all. She would much rather say nothing to Mr. Brune yet.

"Well, my dear, if you feel any hesitation about speaking to him, I should not mind doing it myself. I do not like Mr. Brune; his manners are very uncouth and abrupt, and I have no doubt he will be rude to me. Still, we must not consider that. If you can spare me the carriage this afternoon, I will just drive over to Broom Leas, and have a few words with him."

Margaret groaned. "I thought you agreed with me," she said, "that the best thing we could do was to hold our tongues?"

"Unquestionably the best thing—it is the *only* thing that we can do. But that is not to say that we should neglect any means of gaining information. Mr. Brune must have known more about his brother than we can do, and it is quite possible that he may have been aware of the existence of this Italian lady, and may be able to tell us who she was. At least it can do no harm to ask him."

"I think it may do a great deal of harm," Margaret protested.

But she could neither gag her mother nor lock the door upon her; and so, in the course of the afternoon, Mr. Brune, who was enjoying himself in his shirt-sleeves, lopping off the straggling branches of a laurel hedge on his domain with a billhook, was startled by the apparition of a lady whose visits were never very welcome to him.

Mrs. Winnington's customary bland smile of greeting was tempered by a mournfulness which it was impossible to ignore. "So sorry to disturb you," said she; "but I was told that I should find you here, and as I wanted to speak to you rather particularly——" Here a natural feeling of curiosity caused her to break off, and inquire, "Do you really *like* doing that?"

"I really do," answered Mr. Brune, resuming his coat with some reluctance. "The only objection to hedging and ditching is that, when one is employed in that way, one is scarcely in trim to receive visitors. But I dare say you will kindly excuse me from shaking hands with you, Mrs. Winnington. You were saying that you wanted particularly to speak to me."

"Yes, indeed!" replied Mrs. Winnington with a great sigh.

"Has Philip Marescalchi broken his neck? If he has, don't mind saying so; I can bear to hear the worst."

Mrs. Winnington sighed again. "Oh, no," said she regretfully; "he has not broken his neck. But it is about him that I am anxious to consult you."

And then the tale was told, and was listened to without a word or a sign of interruption. Mrs. Winnington was a good deal put out by the calm way in which every one, except herself, seemed to take the disquieting prospect that was opening out before them.

"Well, Mr. Brune?" she said impatiently, when she had waited for some seconds in vain for her companion to speak.

"Well, Mrs. Winnington?"

"What do you think of all this? Do you believe that there is any truth in it? Do you think your brother was a likely man to make a clandestine marriage?"

"My dear madam, is it possible for me to answer such questions to any purpose? Yes; all things considered, I should say it was probably true. I see no reason why Prosser should have invented the words which she says she heard; and the dates appear to be correct, and there is a suggestive similarity between the names of Brown and Brune. Oh, yes; the chances are all in favour of its being true. As to whether my brother George was a likely man to act as he is said to have done, I really can't give an opinion upon the subject. In one sense, nobody is likely to do such a thing, and, in another sense, anybody is. One is never surprised at hearing that a man has been married on the sly; but I take it that no one has natural proclivities that way."

"But, dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Winnington, "aren't you going to do anything? Do you mean to sit still and allow yourself to be plundered? Can't you make any inquiries?"

"I shall write to my brother's lawyers, and ask them whether they know anything. It appears that Marescalchi's mother was accustomed to receive remittances from her husband's lawyers."

"H'm—yes; it would be well to do that, certainly. I feel that we ought to be bestirring ourselves. It would be a terrible blow to poor Margaret to be driven from her home."

"I shall be only too happy to talk things over with Mrs. Stanniforth, if that would be any comfort to her."

"Well, the truth is that dear Margaret rather shrinks from speaking about the matter at all. But if you can suggest any way in which I could be of service——"

"You are most kind. No; I don't know that you can do anything," replied Mr. Brune, thinking of Diogenes and Alexander, but patiently refraining from applying the precedent to the present case.

A pause of some minutes supervened, during which Mrs. Winnington fidgeted irritably, and Mr. Brune looked wistfully at his billhook. It was evident that the man did not choose to be communicative; and it only remained for his visitor to leave him, consoling herself as best she might with the hope that something—or rather that nothing—might come of the lawyers' letter.

This hope was fulfilled some days later, when Messrs. Hobson & Jobson wrote to say that, to the best of their belief, their late client had

lived and died a bachelor. They had, at all events, never transacted business on his behalf with any Italian lady. So far so good; but Mrs. Winnington, as may possibly be remembered, had a personal acquaintance with the senior member of the firm, and she could not resist writing to him in a friendly, informal manner, to beg for his candid opinion upon this most distressing subject. His answer made her rather uncomfortable.

"Dear Madam (wrote Mr. Hobson),

"We have already been in communication with Mr. Brune with reference to the matter upon which you consult me, and I have nothing to add to the reply sent to him. Speaking generally, however, I may say that, supposing such a marriage as you mention to have taken place, it would in my opinion be in the last degree improbable that Mr. George Brune, or any other man similarly situated, would have let his family lawyers into his secret.

"Faithfully yours,

"SAML. HOBSON."

"And this is the man who has dined with us over and over again, and has stayed in the house upon three separate occasions!" cried Mrs. Winnington, very angry with Mr. Hobson for having written so curtly, and still more angry with him for having suggested such unpleasant doubts. "I will never trouble myself to be civil to a solicitor again as long as I live."

In the meantime Margaret had heard once more from Philip, who filled three pages with a description of Florence, mentioned incidentally that he expected soon to have an interview with his uncle, Signor Cavestri, who was coming from Bologna to meet him, and said not one word about the subject of Margaret's telegram until quite the end of his sheet. "I meant to have told you all about that Conduit Street business," he wrote; "but, after all, I think it will keep until we meet. There are some things which it is just as well not to commit to paper, and one is not at liberty to tell everything even to one's best friends. But, my dear old Meg, how *could* you suppose that, if I had had one wife living, I should think of marrying another? I am not a bit angry, you know; but I am rather amused, I confess, and surprised that you should not know me better. Colonel Kenyon, no doubt, thinks me capable of all manner of iniquity. Even he might have given me credit for some small amount of prudence, though." And then he added in a postscript: "If you have spoken to Nellie of what you have heard, and if she feels at all uneasy or dissatisfied, of course I will write to her more fully. Otherwise I think least said soonest mended for the present."

It was not because this explanation struck her as insufficient that Margaret wrote a line to Hugh Kenyon, requesting him to run down for a day or two and see her. She held—and she was doubtless right in holding—that it was worse than useless to bestow confidence by halves, and that, if she believed Philip at all, she must believe, without requiring

further elucidation, that he was entirely innocent of the offence imputed to him. But with Mrs. Winnington buzzing about her, like a great bluebottle, at all hours of the day, with Mr. Brune and Nellie holding aloof as if they were offended, and with her own uncertainty as to what course events would take, and what development she ought to hope for, she did feel a strong wish for a little sympathy; and, that being so, it was natural that she should turn her eyes towards that quarter whence sympathy had been forthcoming for so many years.

Hugh, it is needless to say, obeyed the summons with alacrity. Despite the melancholy character of the occasion, he arrived in Longbourne in better spirits than he had enjoyed for many months past. Margaret's note had led him to hope that he was to be reinstated in that post of confidential adviser which he had forfeited by his untimely declaration, and which, notwithstanding many friendly assurances to the contrary, he was well aware had never been fully restored to him. She was coming back to him, he thought; she had turned to him instinctively in the time of her trouble; and, although he did not now expect that she would ever consent to be anything more than his friend, it would be a great deal to be received again upon the old terms. Without exactly rejoicing over Philip's downfall, he yet could not help feeling that if that young deceiver were cut off with a shilling—the traditional shilling being represented by a few hundreds a year—his most dangerous rival would be removed.

He was therefore not a little taken aback by the first words that Margaret addressed to him.

"Hugh, what made you give me such a dreadful fright? You were quite mistaken about my poor boy."

"Mistaken! how mistaken?"

"There was no truth whatever in that—report about his being married."

"You mean that he denies it, I suppose."

"Yes. I telegraphed to him at once, and had an answer the same night, and since then I have heard from him. He says it was a natural mistake on your part, but it can all be easily explained."

"God bless my soul! what explanation does he give?"

Margaret was obliged to confess that nothing very explicit had reached her from Philip beyond a bare denial; but that, she said, was quite enough for her. His word was sufficient, and she could perfectly enter into his reasons for disliking to put upon paper what might very well be communicated by word of mouth. Letters, unfortunately, were sometimes read by people to whom they were not addressed, and very likely Philip had thought of that. "It was wrong of me to distrust him at all," she concluded. "For you, of course, it was different; but, as he says, I ought to have known him better."

"Oh! is that all he says?"

"You can see his letter, if you like," answered Margaret, handing



over the sheet in question. "I don't know whether you will find it convincing, but it is quite so to me."

Hugh read the short paragraph which has been quoted above, and drew down the corners of his mouth. "It strikes me as a shuffling sort of statement," he remarked. "It's all very well to say, 'How can you believe that I should be such a blackguard as to do so and so?' but that's no answer to a man who saw you do it."

"It is an answer to me, at any rate. And don't you think, Hugh, that you were rather in a hurry to take things for granted? You never made any inquiries, you know."

"But, my dear Margaret, I had the evidence of my own senses. I saw the woman enter the house with him. I called in Conduit Street afterwards, and found that they were living there as husband and wife. I heard the landlady speak of her as Mrs. Marescalchi. What more would you have?"

"Oh, I admit that it is mysterious," said Margaret; "but what of that? So many things are mysterious until they are explained. Might it not have been to serve a friend in some way that he allowed that woman to pass as his wife for a time? I think that is conceivable."

"I don't," said Hugh shortly.

"And you don't believe him on his word?"

Hugh looked up uneasily. "There is no one on earth whom I trust more implicitly than I do you," he said; "but if you were to tell me that your name was not Margaret Stanniforth, and that you didn't think it necessary to say any more at present, but would explain it all some day or other, how could I bring myself to believe that you were speaking the truth?"

"Ah, well," said Margaret, "women have more faith than men, I suppose. I should believe you if you told me black was white. But never mind. I am as certain as I am of my own existence that Philip will be able to clear himself all in good time; and we won't say any more about it now, especially as I have something else to tell you, which I have been thinking of a great deal more during the last few days."

Colonel Kenyon's astonishment was only equalled by his disgust when he was informed of the fresh complication of which Philip Marescalchi was the central figure. "Confound that fellow!" he exclaimed; "I wish to heaven his mother had scragged him when he was a baby! He seems bound to bring perpetual trouble in one way or another. And the provoking part of it is that you don't mind it a bit. I believe you rather enjoy it."

This little outburst of impatience had the happy effect of making Margaret laugh. Upon which Hugh laughed too; and thus friendly relations, which for a moment had shown symptoms of becoming strained, were re-established.

"Now tell me," said Margaret; "do you think Philip is really Mr. George Brune's son?"



Hugh was compelled to acknowledge that the story had a horrid air of probability about it. "To tell you the truth," he added, "I noticed his likeness to the family long ago; but I set it down to mere coincidence."

"Yes; is it not strange that I should never have remarked it? I see it so plainly now; and not only that, but I can trace a decided resemblance between his character and Mr. Brune's."

"There I can't go along with you."

"That is because you like Mr. Brune, and you have never liked my poor Philip. But perhaps it is not so much a similarity in actual character that I mean, as in ways of speaking and looking at things. I know exactly what Mr. Brune will say in certain cases, and it is just what Philip says, and often in the very same words. Both of them have a way of pretending to laugh at everything, and both of them are really as tender-hearted as women. I wish you knew Philip as well as I do. You can't think what a penitent letter he wrote me about this journey of his to Florence, and how grieved he is at the idea of my having to give up Longbourne. As if it was any fault of his that he is his father's son!"

"Well, I am glad to hear that he is penitent," said Hugh, getting up, and walking about the room. "As for your leaving Longbourne, I don't know about that, I'm sure. It will be a case for the lawyers, I fear."

"Why should it be? If once it can be proved that Count Mare-scalchi and Mr. George Brune were one and the same person, there can be no more to be said. I am sure Mr. Brune would not go to law with Philip."

"Perhaps not; but it's rather an intricate question. You see, old Mr. Stanniforth made a gift of the estate to Jack, and the title-deeds are now in the hands of the trustees. I know no more of law than I do of Hebrew; but I suppose we could not surrender them at all events until the purchase-money had been refunded."

"But then there is the compensation paid by the railway company."

"Yes; but I don't know whether old Stanniforth would disgorge that without making a fight for it. He is a sharp old fellow—or used to be. It is a most unmitigated nuisance, look at it which way you will."

"It will all come right in the end," said Margaret confidently.

"I am not at all so sure of that. I would much rather it went wrong in the beginning, I know. I wonder, now, whether there is any hope of that old Prosser's having trumped up a plausible story to serve some ends of her own. It is difficult to believe that a woman could keep a secret like that entirely to herself for a dozen years and more."

"She had the safety-valve of confession to her parish priest, you see."

"What, to old Langley? Do you mean to say he has known this all along, and never said a word?"

"I suppose he has. He has not been here since the disclosure, and I suspect he is rather afraid of facing us."

"Well he may be, the old Jesuit! I shall look him up this afternoon, and hear what he has to say for himself."

"You won't be rude to him, will you, Hugh? You must remember that he has only done what he would consider to be his bounden duty in keeping Prosser's secret."

"Oh, I won't be rude to him," answered Hugh: "I only want to find out how much he knows. I suppose he'll tell me the truth anyhow."

The result of this determination was that Colonel Kenyon formed one of a congregation of three at evensong, and, waiting for the rector afterwards, put the reverend gentleman, as he mentally expressed it, "through his facings."

"Yes, yes," Mr. Langley said; "an unfortunate affair in many ways; but let us hope that some arrangement may be come to. I am glad the woman has at length made up her mind to tell what she knew. I have been urging her to do so for years past."

"But why didn't you make her speak out? Couldn't you have withheld absolution, or something?"

Mr. Langley smiled. "I think you hardly understand the case," he said. "There could be no question of absolution, the woman having committed no sin. What she revealed to me was in the nature of a strictly confidential communication, made to me as her priest."

"She said it was under seal of confession."

"Ah, yes; a slight confusion of terms not uncommon among the uneducated. It is true that she first divulged the matter to me as a part of her confession; but I pointed out to her at the time that she was wrong in doing so. Of course I could not do otherwise than regard what was imparted to me in such a manner as sacred. Since then I have lost no opportunity of impressing upon her what I believed to be her duty; but she is, unfortunately, a very obstinate person. I should not have felt myself justified in laying a positive command upon her so long as she held it a matter of conscience to keep silence."

"Well, I don't know," said Hugh, twirling his moustache; "I should have thought you might have brought a little more pressure to bear; but it's not much use talking about that now. You believe, then, that old Brune really said all that?"

"I have not a doubt of it; and I may add that I have very little doubt as to young Marescalchi's being the son."

"It's a horrid bore," remarked Hugh. "I expect I shall have a lot of bother over it; and I'm afraid our friends at Broom Leas will suffer." And he went on to explain some of the difficulties which he anticipated, and which were likely to interfere with the amicable family arrangement to which Mr. Langley, as well as Mrs. Prosser, appeared to have looked forward.

Mr. Langley could only express his sympathy and regret, adding, as a moral to be deduced from the whole affair, that if the late Mr. Brune had been a sound Churchman, all this trouble would have been avoided. "In such a case, he would have sent to me upon his death-bed—which I am sorry to say that he did not think fit to do—and the truth would have been revealed."

"What, even if he had made it the subject of a strictly confidential communication?" Hugh could not help saying.

"Unquestionably. Concealment of marriage, and the leaving of a child destitute, would be deadly sin; whereas it might very well be a question with many people how far they were entitled to make public words spoken by one in a state of delirium. But perhaps I had better not weary you with definitions," said Mr. Langley rather coldly. "I trust," he added, "that there is no feeling of soreness as regards me in my dear friend Mrs. Stanniforth's mind."

"Oh, she'll forgive you," said Hugh; "she'd forgive anybody for doing anything." And as he walked away, it occurred to him that there was only one person in the world towards whom he had ever known Margaret to display an unforgiving spirit, and that that person was himself. Which seemed a little hard.

Trudging pensively homewards along the deep lanes, he heard himself, on a sudden, called by name, and was presently overtaken by Nellie Brune—a person whom, under the circumstances, he would much rather not have encountered.

"Have you come down about this business, Colonel Kenyon?" she asked. "Is it really true that Philip is Uncle George's son?"

"Ah, that's just what I want to know, Miss Brune," answered Hugh. "If I were not afraid of making you angry, I should say I hope he isn't."

"Oh, but I hope the same thing," said Nellie quickly.

"Why, I thought the great wish of your life was that Longbourne should come back into the possession of your family."

"But I don't want Mrs. Stanniforth to be turned adrift. And, besides, I could never feel as if Philip were one of us."

"You ought not to have much difficulty in feeling that," said Hugh, looking at her kindly. His honest heart was so full of pity for the poor girl that he hardly knew how to speak to her without betraying himself. He could not doubt that Philip was a married man, and he had already formed an indefinite resolution that he would prove him to be so, and thus at least save Miss Brune from the danger of an irreparable calamity. But what in the world was he to say to the girl now?

She allowed his allusion to pass, and asked: "Do you suppose that Philip knew of this before he went to Florence?"

"Of course he did; it was the old housekeeper who told him, you know. In fact, I imagine that he only went to Florence in order to get at documentary proof of Mr. Brune's marriage."

Nellie tightened her lips, and nodded. "I suspected as much," said she.

"Ah, you're beginning to find the young rascal out," thought Hugh, with some satisfaction. But, feeling that the devil ought to have his due, he said aloud: "I am not sure that you can exactly blame him, you know, for not saying anything about it before he started. It seems that he did write without loss of time."

"He need not have said what was untrue, though. He told us all that he was going there to study."

"Well, perhaps he is going to study."

"Yes; I dare say he is," agreed Nellie hastily, thinking perhaps that she had said too much. "Will you give my best love to Mrs. Stanforth, please?"

"Certainly I will," answered Hugh; "but why don't you come up and see her? She thinks you are offended with her about this unlucky business."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Nellie; "what possible reason could I have for being offended with her? I have kept away lately because—because— It is rather difficult to explain; only don't you know how disagreeable it is to talk over things with people when you don't quite agree with them, and when they—think you ought to agree with them?"

And, having given utterance to this somewhat vague sentiment, Miss Brune took her leave rather hurriedly.

"I wonder whether she really cares for that worthless fellow," mused Hugh, resuming his walk. "I don't believe she does; and I'm sure I hope she doesn't. It was Margaret who got up the match, I suspect. What a pity it is that she will insist upon making people happy in her own way, whether they wish it or not!"

And, as soon as he reached the house, he delivered Nellie's message, adding carelessly on his own account: "She doesn't seem to pine for her absent lover to any alarming extent. Is she very much in love with him, do you think?"

"More so than you might suppose," answered Margaret, smiling. "Nellie shows her feelings very little; but I understand her, and I know that she has never cared a pin's head for any one but Philip. It is a very long-standing attachment on both sides; but want of money has prevented matters from coming to a climax. I am so very glad that the engagement took place while Philip was still a poor man; I think they will both be glad to remember that afterwards."

"But even if he gets Longbourne, he will be a poor man."

"He will be well enough off to marry, I suppose; and then, I hope I may be able to help them out a little."

To this Hugh made no answer, except to shake his head gravely; and as Mrs. Winnington came in at that moment, eager to hear whether anything fresh had been elicited from Mr. Langley, the subject dropped.

He had no further opportunity for private conversation with

Margaret that day. The whole evening was occupied by an amicable contest between her and her mother with reference to the latter lady's move to London ; Mrs. Winnington protesting that she could not bear to leave her daughter in the midst of so much trouble, while Margaret declared that she was in no trouble at all, and that it would distress her beyond everything to deprive Edith of her season. Hugh, knowing what the outcome of the discussion was certain to be, took little interest in its progress, but sat silently twirling his thumbs and heartily wishing that Mrs. Winnington were in London already. Every now and again he was appealed to—"Candidly now, Hugh, do you think dear Margaret ought to be left quite alone?" and so forth. He answered somewhat at random ; which was of the less consequence since his answers were never listened to. Edith remained as silent as he throughout, and was to all appearance quite as indifferent. Once, when, just by way of saying something, he asked her whether she was not looking forward to having a great deal of dancing, she replied that she never danced in London, and volunteered the additional information that she hated London at all times, and particularly during the season. Whereupon Mrs. Winnington glanced sharply over her shoulder, exclaiming, "Edith, my dear child, how can you talk such nonsense!" and Edith at once collapsed.

It was close upon midnight before Mrs. Winnington acknowledged herself vanquished, and laid down her arms. "If you put it in that way, my dear," Hugh heard her saying, "I suppose I ought not to refuse; but I shall be longing to be with you all the time; and I do trust that you will write or telegraph for me at any moment, if you want me. Unless you promise me that, I positively will not go. You see," she continued, turning to Hugh with a deprecatory smile, "how weak I am. I had fully determined to give up all thought of London for the present; but dear Margaret makes such a point of our going that I feel I should have to yield to-morrow, if I did not do so to-day. I am quite ashamed of myself; for I must confess that a few hours ago, I should have said that nothing could shake my resolution."

As, however, she left at ten o'clock on the following morning, it must be assumed that her maid was endowed with the gift of prophecy, and had packed up in anticipation of the event. Her last words to Hugh, as she stepped into the carriage, were: "Well, good-bye, dear Hugh. If you should be coming up to London, you must be sure to call on us in Park Street. I hope you understand that I should not be going away now if I thought I could be of any use here. But I really do not believe I could."

"Not the slightest use in the world," answered Hugh, whose stock of patience, large as it was, had not been quite equal to the demand made upon it by the needless waste of his only evening at Longbourne. His duties compelled him to return to Shorncliffe the same afternoon; and it was a little mortifying to him to perceive that Margaret was rather relieved than otherwise when she was told that he, too, must leave her.

He attributed this to his unfortunate inability to sympathise with her upon the subject that was nearest her heart ; but it was probably quite as much due to a sensation of embarrassment on her part at finding herself alone in the house with him. It had been comparatively easy to bury the past in oblivion when writing to him, or when other people were at hand ; but now that they two were face to face, and free from all chance of interruption, she found it impossible to keep a certain day in the past summer out of her memory ; and what was worse, she saw that he was labouring under precisely the same difficulty. Besides which, he had a patient, half-reproachful way of looking at her which made her shy and uncomfortable ; and this, in its turn, made her angry. There was something ridiculous, she thought, in a woman of her age being subject to such girlish afflictions ; and, after the manner of women, she visited her anger in some degree upon its innocent cause.

Upon the whole, Hugh felt, as he drove away, that his visit had not been a success ; and the same reflection was at the same moment passing through Margaret's mind, while she stood on the doorstep, watching the departure of her guest.

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## Memories of Léon Gambetta.

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Now that the emotion caused by M. Gambetta's sudden death has partly subsided, people have begun to ask calmly what position this remarkable man will fill in the gallery of departed French rulers? Historical judgments may be accurately predicted in the case of a man whose whole public life has lain open before the world for years. It will not be with Léon Gambetta as it was with Mirabeau, whose fame was posthumously slurred by the papers found in Louis XVI.'s iron cupboard. If there had been anything discreditable in Gambetta's short but most eventful official career at Tours and Bordeaux, it would have come out during the terribly minute inquisition held by the Commission appointed to examine the acts of the Government of the National Defence; but that Commission, composed of Royalists and Bonapartists, declared, with ill-grace enough, that not one of the charges brought against the ex-Dictator had been substantiated. He had been accused of pocketing a large commission on the Morgan Loan, of passing disadvantageous contracts for army stores and ammunition to his private gain, of employing disreputable adventurers and conniving at their peculations. The written denunciations against him (many of them anonymous) filled "three large furniture vans;" a dozen sworn clerks were occupied during ten months in sorting them, and three examining magistrates, forming a secret tribunal, sifted the mass of accusations as if they had been evidence against a suspected criminal. Yet, from the cartloads of calumnies nothing was evolved; and the Duke d'Audiffret-Pasquier, the President of the Commission, said to M. Edouard Hervé, who was then editor of the Orleanist *Journal de Paris*: "*C'est un honnête homme* : he did France a great deal of harm, but he erred from over-confidence in himself and in our weakened country." No fuller homage could have been paid to a public man by an opponent, even though one may admit that over-confidence in himself or in the resources of his country is a serious fault in a ruler.

With respect to his doings as an agitator and parliamentary strategist, Gambetta's memory will be found equally free from blighting taints, as, happily for him, he had no taste for intrigue. In this he differed from M. Thiers. The greatest admirers of Thiers are dismayed when they study his political life to find at every turn too well-authenticated stories of backstairs plots which seem to indicate an utter want of sincerity in the man. He was not insincere, but he was a believer in statecraft; he put too much faith in finessing; he thought great ends were best reached by tortuous paths, and his policy always consisted in playing off one



faction against another, feigning to rely upon each turn by turn. Everything that Thiers did could be explained away so as to leave no reproach upon him ; but his conduct was always requiring these explanations. Gambetta's record, on the contrary, stands out written in large plain sentences which demand no footnotes. Though he was of Genoese extraction, and was always being accused by his enemies of Italian astuteness, Gambetta used his acumen to penetrate the tactics of his opponents but not to outwit them ; he was like a general who keeps himself informed of the movements of the enemy, but allows them to win advantages in petty skirmishes, relying on his power to crush them in pitched battles. Thiers delighted in secret negotiations, and in cunningly worded orders of the day which obscured the issues of a parliamentary conflict ; Gambetta hated ambiguities and truces, and was always on his guard against emissaries who came to propose "arrangements." His alliance with the Legitimists at the first election for life-senators in 1875 was a dashing flank movement by which he defeated the Orleanists ; but there was nothing underhand in it. The treaty with the Marquis de Franchieu was concluded openly in the smoking-room of the Assembly at Versailles, where Gambetta said to the Royalist nobleman : "Your strength in the Assembly does not entitle you to claim more than ten life-sensorships, and you will find that the Right Centre will hardly allow you so many as that ; but if you vote with us and give us fifty-five of the seats, you shall have twenty." The Marquis touched his hat coldly as if Gambetta's huckstering tone displeased him ; but the bargain was struck, and if the Legitimists had not grown frightened when two-thirds of the elections had taken place they would have got all the seats promised them. As it was, they secured twelve, the Republicans forty-eight, and the Orleanists, owing to the Legitimate defection, managed in the scrambles of the final polls to win fifteen. In their plans for the election the Orleanists had coolly allotted sixty seats to their own party and had decided that the other fifteen should go at haphazard.

On this, as on some other occasions, Gambetta seems to have been served by luck. It may be asked what would have become of the Republic if the Marquis de Franchieu had declined Gambetta's offer, and if the new Upper House, which was to play so great a part in the events of the next two years, had been packed at the outset with constitutional Royalists ? But it may also be asked what would have happened in 1870 if Napoleon III.'s Government had not played so recklessly into the hands of the Republicans by declaring war against Germany ? After the *plébiscite* the Emperor's position was very strong, and Gambetta's, from a statesman's point of view, weak and unpromising. Thiers had advised him so to act that he might in time become Liberal Premier to Napoleon III. or to the latter's son ; but Gambetta, by declaring himself again and again, with needless vehemence, the irreconcilable foe to Imperial institutions, had condemned himself to remain a revolutionist or else to become a turncoat. A man whose ambition

merely self-seeking would not have compromised his prospects in this way—all the less so as Gambetta was warned by prudent Liberals that he was doing their cause no good by his desperate tactics.

But it was his whole-hearted faith in Republicanism that carried him along; and it is from his stubborn self-denying combativeness for the cause he loved that will be drawn his claims to a great fame. Without discussing the question as to whether Republicanism is a good thing for France or not, it may be affirmed that a man who battles for any cause as Gambetta did for that of the Republic—foreseeing its destinies when as yet few other men did, staking all his hopes and his very life on them, stands apart from and above the common rank of statesmen who always look to see which way the popular wind blows before they set their sails. It must not be forgotten that Gambetta's constancy to the Republic was preserved under circumstances that would have sickened most men, and in the face of inducements to trim, which, although they were overcome, must have tried every fibre in his moral nature. In 1871, during the last days of the Commune, his best friend, Clément Laurier, became a sudden convert to Royalism. "These wretches (the Communists) have destroyed all my illusions," he wrote to Gambetta, who was at St. Sebastian; "but perhaps I could have forgiven them everything except their ingratitude to you. See how their newspapers have reviled you! A time may come when the Republic will be possible in France, but that day is not with us yet. Let us acknowledge that we have both made a mistake. As for you, with your unrivalled genius, you have now a patriotic career open to you if you will cast in your lot with the men who are going to try and quell anarchy."

One must recall the confusion of the dreadful times when these lines were written, to understand how they moved Gambetta. The extreme Republicans loathed him, and many moderate Republicans eyed him askance. Thiers had called him "a madman"; M. Grévy had said that he would die in the skin of a rebel; on the other hand, Royalists and Bonapartists were clamouring furiously for his impeachment, accusing him of the loss of two French provinces, which would never have been confiscated by the Germans if peace had been concluded after Sedan. The Royalists, however, were in want of a leader, and if Gambetta had stood up, like Laurier, to make his *mea culpa*, and to say that the divisions in the Republican party had convinced him that the restoration of a monarchy was the best thing for France, the effect of this apostasy must have been immense—so immense as to compensate him for any passing obloquy from old friends, had he been a mere doxomaniac as his enemies asserted. Laurier never concealed that he had endeavoured to work upon Gambetta by every argument in his power; appealing not only to his nobler instincts, but to those smaller passions which burn in every human breast. He urged him to be revenged on the Radicals who had flouted him, and to "dish" M. Thiers who had held him cheap. He pointed out that the possibilities of Republicanism were far remote,

whereas the post of Royalist parliamentary leader was a thing that could be grasped at once and would bring with it power, dignities, and the chances of doing great good to France. Gambetta had a weakness for the titles and symbols of power, and he loved good company; so Laurier flashed before his eyes the prospect of becoming a Duke, a Grand Cordon, and a High Chancellor. But Gambetta only laughed at all this. Laurier had gone to see him at St. Sebastian, where, as Bonapartist journals affirmed, the ex-Dictator, enriched with millions, was luxuriating in marble halls and orange-groves. The truth is, he found Gambetta lodging in two small rooms over the shop of a dealer in earthenware, and much pestered by mosquitoes. "His face," wrote Laurier to a friend, "was all bumps and hollows, like a map of Switzerland, and he was jaded by want of sleep and concern as to his money affairs." Gambetta's whole fortune at that time consisted of 600*l.*, balance of the last quarter's salary he had drawn at Bordeaux; and when he returned to Paris in the autumn of 1871 with the intention of founding his newspaper *La République Française*, he experienced some difficulty in finding a capitalist who would advance him money for starting the journal. At that period he went to lodge in a third-floor apartment of the Rue Montaigne, and his aunt, Mdlle. Massabie, cooked for him.

This is the man, who, up to the very day of his death, was being villified by certain Republicans as a traitor to their party, as a democratic Heliogabalus, bloated, sensuous, and fussing, with a vulgar ambition! It makes one laugh to think of it. Gambetta—with all his faults, and he had many—was one of the most honest men who ever dignified the name of politician, and all who knew him can bear witness to the modest demeanour of his integrity. He was not one of those Frenchmen who thump their breasts and exclaim, *Moi qui suis honnête homme*. M. Albert Wolff has written of him that, when he was a struggling barrister in the Latin Quarter, he used often to be appealed to as an arbiter on points of honour by brother advocates of his standing and by students; and the opinions sought of him were always delivered with a jovial kindness exempt from dogmatism. So it was with him, when, in his days of influence, he was worried by people wanting him to do things contrary to his duty—for he had to resist other solicitations besides those of his friend Laurier. Grandly vituperative as he could be in his public speeches when interruptions, ironical cheering, or insulting epigrams seemed sometimes to madden him like a bull amid the fireworks of a Spanish arena, he somehow never got angry when, in private life, people made him proposals which implied a total disbelief in his principles. Hearing of some grossly impertinent request that had been made to him, his secretary, M. Reinach, once exclaimed: "Why didn't you kick the fellow downstairs?" "Kick him downstairs!" laughed Gambetta, "why, fat as I am, I should have lost my balance and rolled after him; where would my dignity have been then?" On another occasion, the wife of an ex-Bonapartist minister—a lady of great fascination—took it upon

herself to call on Gambetta and point out to him how much he would advance his fortunes if he cast in his lot with the Prince Imperial. He listened good-naturedly, "feeling like a mastiff who was being talked to by a tomtit," as he afterwards put it, till at length the lady, taking a bunch of violets (the Bonapartist emblem) from her dress, asked him to wear it in his button-hole that day. "With pleasure," answered Gambetta, glad to bring the interview to an end; but as soon as he had said this he remembered that the date was the 16th of March, the Prince Imperial's birthday, and that, if he appeared at the Chamber of Deputies with violets in his button-hole, some very silly rumours might get into circulation. He reminded his visitor of this, but she was inexorable. "You've promised!" she said. "Ah, well!" replied Gambetta, and he wore the violets all that afternoon, causing thereby just the sort of gossip he had anticipated. One may add that such gossip was not indifferent to him. Highly sensitive as he was, he often winced inwardly at ill-natured sayings which he bore with outward composure.

Gambetta's chief fault was an irrepressible restlessness, which he carried into everything. He could prepare a large, fine plan of political action, and wait patiently for its accomplishment as a whole; but, meanwhile, he would meddle and muddle with the details. Instances of this can be furnished from his doings as conductor of the *République Française*. He wrote often for that paper and sometimes sent in to the printer articles remarkable for their statesman-like views, but, in the very same issue to which he had contributed some leader that was intended to conciliate a particular politician or faction, he would suddenly shoot in a paragraph tending to quite a contrary effect. M. Challemeil Lacour and M. Isambert, who were successively editors of the journal, had a dread of him when he strolled into the editorial room with a bundle of the morning's papers under his arm, and proceeded to read, as he called it. He would do this on idle days, when the Chambers were not sitting, and when he could treat himself to the relaxation of performing as much work as would have fatigued a sub-editor. His reading would be interrupted by violent snorts, and, catching up a sheet of paper, he would scrawl off twenty lines which seemed to splutter fire like crackers. No topic was beneath his notice, and no enemy was too small for his shot. By his paragraphs he frequently did mischief which it took his cold, cautious fellow-workers days to repair.

Gambetta was not a good writer. The best of his articles read like written speeches, and were turgid; many of them, too, were of inordinate length. He used to come in powerfully excited after a great debate and say, "I shall want about half-a-column to-night," and, sitting down, he would begin to cover page after page with his close, cramped handwriting. For so impetuous a man he wrote a curiously stiff hand, and, though his fingers moved fast, their motion was feverish and spasmodical. It could never be said of him that he "dashed off" any of his effusions; he rather jerked them off, swaying the upper part of his body ponderously

to and fro as he wrote, and now and then collecting his thoughts by passing his large left hand rapidly through his hair. Black coffee would be brought him, and he would go on writing; then he would call for a bottle of Burgundy and gulp down two or three glasses, munching sweet biscuits afterwards, or else sticks of chocolate in lieu of dinner. The editor, who had been making allowances for half a column, would see Gambetta's article overflow one column after another, washing away all other articles and notes, till it spread like an inundation over the entire front page of the paper. Then with a hearty "*Ouf*," the French exclamation of relief, he would throw down his pen and say, "There, I think those few lines will state our case plainly; what! do they really run to five columns? *Sacrebleu*! it seemed to me as if I had only been writing ten minutes!" and upon this he would break into a laugh that resounded all over the office, and partly dispelled the gloom of his contributors, who had been pulling wry faces at seeing their evening's work lost.

It would not do for the editor to touch a line of Gambetta's writing. He was the first to laugh at the exaggerated developments of his articles once they had appeared in print; but when they were going to press he showed a nervous impatience of correction, and a sort of puerile vanity in repeating that "every hyphen and comma" had its importance. The same obstinacy was observable in his parliamentary tactics. It was easy to argue him away from a particular course before he had made up his mind about it; but once he had begun to move he was no more to be stopped than an elephant on the charge. Having a few devoted friends who understood him and knew in what emergencies he required guidance, he was often withheld from hasty action; but sometimes his headlong impetuosity took his most intimate confidants unawares. About this time last year, during his brief premiership, he spread consternation amongst his friends and his Cabinet colleagues by insisting that his pet Electoral Reform Bill (for *scrutin de liste*) should be introduced. It was pointed out to him that if he waited for a year or two, and gradually accustomed the Republican party to the measure, it would be passed, whereas there was no chance of getting it carried by a Chamber only a few months old, which would be voting its own dissolution by letting the Bill become law. "They shall swallow the Bill now, and as I have prepared it," ejaculated Gambetta; and this word "swallow," being reported in the lobbies, was the chief cause of his downfall. When the numbers of the division were announced and Gambetta found himself in a minority of fifty votes, he turned pale, and, laying a hand upon M. Spuller's shoulder, said huskily, "The fact is, I have not felt well of late, and I dare say I blundered; but all the same I am glad to get out of that;" pointing to the seat he had occupied as President of the Council.

It has been said that Gambetta took his fall from office much to heart, and that he was never quite the same man afterwards. This

is a confusion between cause and effect. The *post-mortem* examination of Gambetta's body has revealed that he had been suffering for years from a disease which must have carried him off very soon, even if an accidental wound from a revolver had not accelerated his end. All through the past year he was in low spirits from pain and the effect of hypnotics; and the splenetic policy which he pursued in office was undoubtedly a symptom of his disordered condition. But he experienced no more than a temporary mortification at his overthrow; because it was his ambition to become President of the Republic, not to remain Premier. He had accepted office because it had been in a manner forced upon him, and he would have continued to hold it, had he been able to do so on his own terms—that is, with an electoral system which would have secured to him a large and pliant majority. He must have used up his popularity, however, had he tried to rule with an unmanageable Chamber; and so he courted a fall in order that he might come up fresh for the presidential struggle of 1884-5. That is the only explanation of his conduct; but the signs of his failing powers were visible—first in the fact that he played his part clumsily so that he got an undignified fall, and second in the want of recuperative energy which he displayed afterwards. All through the last session his speeches and articles, especially those on the Egyptian question, showed him to be floundering in search of a popular policy; and they betrayed his secret alarm at the discovery that his eloquence had begun to lose its magic.

Yet he remained to the very last a superb orator. He was really the modern incarnation of Ogmios, that god of words whom the Gauls worshipped, and out of whose mouth flowed chains to hold listeners captive. Even when read, his speeches communicate a glow; but when heard, they stirred one as everything artistically perfect—whether a fine piece of music, a noble painting, or a well-written book—must do. The parts of speech, it has often been observed, are three—words, look, and tone: to the parts of oratory gesture must be added; and in Gambetta gesture was an art carried to its highest finish. Actors of the Théâtre Français went to hear and see him. Mounet-Sully, who was going to play the part of Augustus in *Cinna*, studied him during one of his most impassioned harangues, and rather weakly observed: “Comme il serait majestueux s'il portait la toge!” Gambetta was majestic enough without the toga. Some of his movements in the tribune had an incomparable dignity, others a most persuasive grace; there were times when you could think you saw a sword flash in his grasp, and others when, as he made an appeal to concord, you wondered that his enemies did not rush forward to seize his outstretched hand. The late Bishop of Orleans once shed tears on hearing him—not ostentatious tears intended to show that he was in sympathy with the speaker's lamentations over the horrors of the war, but furtive tears which he sought to hide. “I have been thinking,” he said to Duke Decazes, “that if that man had become a priest, he would have been another Peter the Hermit.”



It must be noted, nevertheless, that Gambetta only succeeded in the highest kind of oratory. Napoleon I., who won great battles so easily, was always beaten at chess; and similarly Gambetta, who had such power to sway masses, was strangely inapt to convince individuals. Las Cases remarks, in his *Mémorial de Ste. Hélène*, that the Emperor was worsted at chess because he would insist upon fighting with his pawns; and so Gambetta, who put forth the most lofty arguments in public debates, would not scruple to use the meanest reasons in discussions *tête-à-tête*. He seemed to have a shamefaced fear that his hearer should think he was canting, or "*qu'il faisait de la pose*," to use the French term. This was not always the case, for at dinner-parties, with friends round his table, he was often as happy in his sallies as when he was declaiming from a balcony or a platform; but he was very liable to fits of awkwardness when conversing alone with men of great rank and nicely polished manners whom he knew to be unfriendly to him. With these he was frequently churlish and downright aggressive. Once, during the Marshalate, he met Count Wimpffen, the late Austrian ambassador, who, not catching the meaning of some French expression which he had used, put up his hand to his ear and said, "I beg pardon?" Unfortunately the Count was noted for his antipathy towards Republicanism, so Gambetta chose to construe this harmless little gesture into a mockery: "Look here, M. l'Ambassadeur," he said to the astonished diplomatist, "it's quite true I speak the tongue of the people, but if you like I will have my remarks translated into *heraldic jargon* for you."

The post of Minister for Foreign Affairs was the one least suited to a man so sensitive and self-conscious as Gambetta was. He wore his heart upon his sleeve, and the peck of a diplomatist's tongue, especially if that *diplomate* happened to be a lady, made it bleed sorely. He wanted to be Prime Minister without portfolio, and should have insisted on having his way in this matter despite M. Grévy's rather jealous objections, for the details of departmental business overtax the energies of a man who throws heart and soul into everything he undertakes; besides which Gambetta always lost his head when he had to argue with persons singly in corners, or when he had to resist appeals made to his good-nature, his generosity, or his vanity, by designing subordinates or strangers who perceived the vulnerable side of his character. To be seen at his best, Gambetta wanted an audience at once large and responsive—it was not necessary that he should get applause; loud, boisterous opposition suited his purpose equally well by rousing the leonine spirit in him. Coldness in others chilled his heart, so that it may be imagined how he fared amidst ambassadors and placemen who are essentially gelid. If it were not dipping too deep into his private life, one might relate how at one time he was kept miserable for days by a man-servant, an old soldier of crabbed temper, who used to treat him to prolonged fits of sulks. A friendly Minister of the Interior at last took pity upon him by presenting the cantankerous domestic with a *bureau de tabac*.

It was because he craved for responsiveness that Gambetta could never have made a great figure at the Bar, although it was a forensic speech that first brought him to renown. Paradoxical as it may seem to say so, Gambetta's best speeches as an *avocat* were delivered during the first seven years of his professional life, when he lived upon briefs handed over to him by M. Crémieux, and by his friend Laurier, and when he laboured to make his way by patiently mastering tedious subjects. Once he had felt his wings grow, as it were, he rose in air too high above the beaten road where good "practices" are to be obtained. His famous philippic in the Delescluze affair cost his client six months' imprisonment and a heavy fine. He might by one or two more of such efforts have added to his reputation as a rhetorician, but solicitors would soon have shunned a man who made himself a name at the expense of his clients. If, on the other hand, Gambetta had reverted to the sober methods of his early days at the Bar, he must have failed, for he would have pleaded without heart. Once a man has tasted the tumult of popular applause he hungers for it again; and feels ill at ease talking in small, silent courts, before solemn judges: "Ris done, imbécile!" was an apostrophe which an *avoué* once heard fly *sotto voce* from Gambetta's lips while President Vivien sat listening with a wooden face to a comical speech by Clément Laurier, who was the funny dog of the Parisian Bar.

It was, again, owing to Gambetta's yearning after sympathy and demonstrativeness that he never visited England, which had been represented to him as a country where men have freezing manners. His friend, Sir Charles Dilke, several times invited him to come over; and he received flattering invitations from some political associations which promised him as enthusiastic a reception as that which greeted Garibaldi in 1865. But his friend and comrade, the actor Coquelin, had given him a dispiriting account of how the performances of the Théâtre Français company went off in London. "We have good, polite audiences," said Coquelin, "but not one-third of the people in the house understand what we say; they applaud with their finger-tips at the wrong places, and our most subtle pleasantries fall flat." "Oh, yes, I see," responded Gambetta, "I should stand up to be stared at like a fat man in a fair, and I should see people wringing their mouths to extract smiles at the moments when I was struggling to move them." Gambetta very nearly crossed the Channel in 1871, immediately after the war and before the Communal outbreak, when he hoped that his presence on our shores might rouse a vast popular demonstration of sympathy for France. Unquestionably it would have done so; but it was pointed out to him that his coming might seriously embarrass the British Government, and he abandoned his projected visit "out of deference for Mr. Gladstone," as he said. He always spoke kindly of the great English orator, and regretted that, being unable to understand our language, he could never hope to enjoy an evening in the House of Commons. "Mr. Gladstone and I may not think alike on most points," he once said, at a time when

the *République Française* was siding with Lord Beaconsfield on the Eastern question, "but we are both Liberals, and though our paths sometimes diverge, we are walking towards the same goal, and must often meet. Besides, I have heard even his enemies say that he is a good man, and that is a kind of praise public men do not often get from their foes."

In more recent times the Prince of Wales invited Gambetta to visit England, and the French statesman's reasons for declining H.R.H.'s proposal—or at least for adjourning his acceptance of it—are of an amusing kind. Those who have seen Sardou's comedy of *Rabagas* will remember the lively discussion that arises when Rabagas is summoned to Prince Florestan's palace and hesitates as to whether he can with due regard to his dignity as a Republican put on knee-breeches. Gambetta had no objection to Court costume; but he had to consider what the growing number of his Radical enemies would say if they saw him strolling about in royal palaces. André Gill, the spiteful caricaturist, published in the *Lune* a cartoon which depicted Gambetta as a lion having his claws cut and his mane curled by the Princess of Wales (*Punch* by-the-by once published a similar one, in which Mr. Chamberlain, then Mayor of Birmingham, was the lion). Gambetta laughed at the cartoon, but it nettled him; and he decided—perhaps wisely, considering his difficult position—that he would not accept royal hospitalities, though he would receive kings and princes with all proper respect if they came to him.

It is well known that he favoured the Athenian, not the Spartan model of a Republic. He knew his countrymen too well to think that they could be converted into Puritans. He wanted Paris to remain the city of cities, the centre of art, letters, fashion—and perhaps the Grand Hotel of the world; and he took up all of Napoleon III.'s policy in the matter of public works, knowing well how stately monuments mark the grandeur of a régime, and leave imperishable memorials of it. "*Je veux ma République belle, bien parée*," he said, in a speech to his townsmen of Cahors, and because he said "*ma République*" the wanton malice of his enemies accused him of aiming at dictatorship, that he might confiscate all the public liberties and reduce the French once more to the diet of *placentas et circenses*. This was the outcry raised against him with unmeasured virulence during the last two years of his life, and most loudly by the Communists whom his intercession had caused to be liberated from New Caledonia. It was said, of course, that he had advocated the amnesty in order to curry favour with the populace, but it would be misjudging Gambetta's shrewdness to suppose that he ever reckoned upon the gratitude of those whom he set free. He fully foresaw that Humbert, Louise Michel, and the others would all band themselves together against him; but when urged to leave these people at the antipodes, he said, with his usual generous impulsiveness: "Bah, the poor wretches have suffered enough. I might have been transported

too if matters had turned out differently in 1870, and I have a fellow-feeling with them all. In any case a Republic with State prisons full is an absurdity."

These traits, and the others that have been set down in this paper by one who knew Gambetta well, may have served to sketch the outlines of his truly noble and lovable character. It may be asked now whether he died too soon, or whether by dying before he came to power again he saved himself from errors and France from calamities that might have destroyed his fame? This question must be answered, on a review of his whole public career, by saying most emphatically that Gambetta's death is an immense loss for France. He was the greatest man in the Republic, and it would have been natural, according to the Republican theory, that he should succeed in time to the highest office in the State; nor is it to be doubted that, loving the Republic as he did, and having served it with so much devotion and honesty, he would have found in his love a power of self-restraint to keep him from courses that might have been hurtful to his own work. For the establishment of the Republic was his own work, principally. He proclaimed its birth in 1870, he gave it a baptism of some glory in the fiery though useless resistance which he opposed to the German invasion, and he kept it standing at a time when it required the support of a sturdy, vigilant champion. To the end it must be believed that, so far as in him lay, he would have preserved it from harm. A few days before his end, during a lull of pain when he began to feel hopeful of recovery, he said to Dr. Lannelongue, who was attending him: "I have certainly made many mistakes, but people must not imagine that I am unaware of it. I often think over my faults, and if things go well, I daresay I shall try the patience of my friends less often. *On se corrige.*"

Perhaps these almost dying words are grander in their humility than the Roman Emperor's—" *Si bene egi, plaudite.*"

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## Church-going Tim.

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### I.]

TIM BLACK is bedridden, you say?  
 Well now, I'm sorry. Poor old Tim!  
 There's not in all the place to-day  
 A soul as will not pity him.

### II.

These twenty years, come hail, come snow,  
 Come winter cold, or summer heat,  
 Week after week to church he'd go  
 On them two hobbling sticks for feet.]

### III.

These years he's gone on crutches. Yet  
 One never heard the least complaint.  
 And see how other men will fret  
 At nothing; Tim was quite a saint.

### IV.

And now there's service every day,  
 I say they keep it up for him;  
 We busier ones, we keep away—  
 There's mostly no one there but Tim.

### V.

Yes, quite a saint he was. Although  
 He never was a likely man  
 At his own trade; indeed, I know  
 Many's the day I've pitied Nan.

## VI.

She had a time of it, his wife,  
With all those children and no wage,  
As like as not, from Tim. The life  
She led! She looked three times her age.

## VII.

The half he had he'd give to tramps  
If they were hungry, or it was cold—  
Pampering up them idle scamps,  
While Nan grew lean and pinched and old.

## VIII.

He'd let her grumble. Not a word  
Or blow from him she ever had—  
And yet I've heard her sigh, and heard  
Her say she wished as he was bad.

## IX.

Atop of all the fever came;  
And Tim went hobbling past on sticks.  
Still one felt happier, all the same,  
When he'd gone by to church at six.

## X.

Not that I wished to go. Not I!  
With Joe so wild, and all those boys—  
It takes my day to clean, and try  
To settle down the dust and noise.

## XI.

But still—out of it all, to glance  
And see Tim hobbling by so calm,  
As though he heard the angels' chants  
And saw their branching crowns of palm.



## XII.

And when he smiled, he had a look,  
One's burden seemed to loose and roll  
Like Christian's in the picture-book :  
It was a comfort, on the whole.

## XIII.

It made one easier-like, somehow—  
It made one, somehow, feel so sure,  
That far above the dust and row  
The glory of God does still endure.

## XIV.

You say he's well, though he can't stir :  
I'm sure you mean it kind—But, see,  
It's not for him I'm crying, sir,  
It's not for Tim, sir ; it's for me.

A. MARY F. ROBINSON.

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### A Strip of Suffolk Seaboard.

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On the low coast of Suffolk, just a hundred miles from London, lies in sweet seclusion from the noisy highway the pretty village of Dunwich. Its double row of cottages and farmhouses stands a little back from the sea on the southern edge of a crescent-shaped tract of emerald marshland and immediately under a sweep of higher ground which shuts it in on the south and west. Its dwellings are mostly prim, modern-looking buildings of genuinely red brick, and have enough similarity of form to suggest the presence of a controlling authority not devoid of taste in architectural matters; for they are pretty and even ornate-looking, with their tapering roofs, their polygonal chimneys, and the carved woodwork about their gables. They are overgrown with fruit trees or climbing plants, the branches of which all the summer make a festal garland about their projecting porches and casements. A small modern-looking church, well-proportioned to the size of the village, stands at one end of it. In addition to the church the eye easily singles out a well-built school and a fair-sized inn, which last, instead of making a great display of hospitality by a large and glaring signboard, gives a quiet assurance of competence to provide for man and beast by its air of old-fashioned dignity. One other feature strikes the eye in the village itself, and that is a diminutive, toy-like windmill, which seems by its position to have for its function the pumping of water out of the marshes. The little machine, though no doubt able to throw itself into a great flurry on occasion, is on this still day taking things easily enough, only making a languid revolution or two now and again, and then lapsing into complete rest. Beyond the village, close to the beach, we spy a cluster of fishermen's huts, which by their vermilion roofs give a touch of still warmer colouring to the place. Above the village on the higher level near the sea stand the ruins of a church, enough being left to give a pretty complete outline. Further back are extensive ruins of walls, which display here and there a fine arched gateway. These ruins, running just above the line of the village, their outline clearly marked against the sky, form a curious appendage to the prim and thoroughly modern-looking place.

This double row of cottages, it may be said at once, is not the whole of Dunwich. So far we have seen only one of its streets, known as St. James's Street. Detached from this on the higher ground to the south-west, hidden away from view, is another quarter which is designated as the High Street. It is a similar line of picturesque cottages, screened on the seaward side by a thick plantation. Passing through the lower village, and following a sandy lane to the left which runs seawards under

the high ground, we pass below a prominent coast-guard station and presently arrive at the cluster of boatmen's houses. They are wooden structures blackened with tar, which serves admirably to intensify the brightness of their vermilion tile roofs. These sheds or huts form a curious feature of this Suffolk coast. One finds them everywhere, now ranged in rows on the smooth turf inside the beach, now nestling in compact groups under a bit of cliff, and now strewn on the upper levels of the beach itself. They seem to delight in illustrating every absurdity of uncouth form. Their quaintness of structure is enhanced by the ends of old boats, which now, placed vertically, do duty as a side, and now, bottom upwards, eke out the roofing. A finishing touch of grotesqueness is sometimes supplied by a showy figurehead or a board bearing the proud title of a ship, as *Emulation* or *Enterprise*, which has a comic pathos in its present humble surroundings. They are storage huts, filled with fishing gear, corks, nets, and so on, and supply interiors which in their rich gloom of blacks and browns would have delighted the eye of Rembrandt. Here at Dunwich the sheds are less unconventional than elsewhere, and seem to have accommodated themselves to the prevailing air of neatness. Turning now to the beach, we find that it is a very ordinary one, made up of shingle and small pebbles with streaks of sand towards the water's edge. Here lie about half a dozen fishing-boats, with their bows pointing straight to the sea.

At this point the low marshy seaboard gives place to a line of cliff. Looking northward, the eye traces the gentle curve of a broad bay. This is bounded at the further extremity by Southwold, which seen from here runs well out into the sea and shuts off the view of the coast further north. It seems to stand quite high above the low coast. It has an irregular pyramidal outline, the apex being constituted by a fine church tower, and on a sunny day it glows with all manner of warm tints. Looking in the other direction, our eye follows a long and tolerably straight sweep of yellowish cliff, down which bright verdure creeps here and there, and above which may be seen tufts of tall yellow wild flowers, and further on a carpet of purple heather reaching the very edge of the declivity. A climb up to the cliff by a path of loose sand takes us presently to the ruins of the church, which we now discover to be only a few yards from the edge. Just beyond this can be seen a span of the plantations which divide the High Street from the sea. These are a part of the squire's estate, and just beyond them, standing well back from the sea, half embowered in woods, is the squire's seat, a picturesque house, like the village, half old and half new in look, and of a pattern which seems to have served as a distant model for all the other buildings of the place.

The neighbourhood of Dunwich offers little in the way of wild or romantic scenery. Yet there is a good deal that is very pleasant to the eye, and there are a few points which have a rare sort of picturesqueness. Like all the lowlying lands of East Suffolk, it is not a very fertile region.

Crabbe gives a fairly accurate description of the district in the poem which is supposed to represent his native town, Aldeburgh :—

Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,  
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor,  
From thence a length of burning sand appears,  
Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;  
Rank weeds that every art and care defy  
Reign o'er the land and rob the blighted rye.

The salt marshes near the sea are said to yield rich pasturage, and this one would infer from their emerald greenness; but the higher ground is for the most part sandy and poor. The consequence is that cultivation, when attempted, is apt to be a very half-hearted affair, while many tracts are altogether given over to the "withering brake" and the hardy, unexact heather. Dunwich may be said to be girt about on the south and west by a chain of heaths or commons. They are of good extent, stretching in some places as far as eye can see, and having in their firm, billowy outline a look of the Yorkshire moors about them. Here in August the pinks and deep purples of the heather, the almost fierce yellow of the gorse, aided by the warm ochre tint of an occasional spray of prematurely turning bracken, make up quite a banquet of colour. In the half-fashioned fields, too, which lie about these commons, and where the contending claims of nature and man have ended in a grotesque compromise, splendour of colour is supplied by the yellow marguerite, which here shoots straight and tall in all the defiant pride of life. The expanses of blooming heath are relieved by tracts of fir and other wood, which give a picturesque jaggedness of line to the distant uplands and a depth of mysterious gloom to the hollows.

Dunwich, unknown to the tourist, is in "the height of the season" the abode of perfect quiet. Here the jaded brain-worker may take a deep and refreshing draught of the repose for which he thirsts. Safe from the curious passer-by, he may throw himself on soft sward or yielding heather and give himself over to the soothing influence of the most restful of scenery. If, for example, he selects for his couch the smooth grass above the cliff in the shadow of the ruins, his delighted eye will wander over the vast expanse of many-tinted water, where are gliding, as in the mazy movements of a dream, a hundred sail. As he looks perhaps the London steamer heaves in sight, laden with tourists for Yarmouth, and enhances his consciousness of retirement by contrasting images. Or a German band may trudge by on the cliff, hurrying past his retreat with stolid indifference in their eagerness to reach the next watering-place. From their scant response to his greeting he gains new satisfaction, assured that no piercing clarionet or discordant horn will vex his soul in his present resting-place. If, again, he chooses for his bed the fine common grass between the beach and the marshes, his senses will be lulled by all manner of soft delights. Here flourish the flowers which love the sandy soil adjoining a sea beach—the handsome yellow poppy, the

beautiful convoivulus, and the finely-carved sea holly. Under the narcotic influence of the wandering bees' deep hum and of those numerous sweet odours which mean the proximity of the sea to those who drank them in with the salt air in their childhood, he may dreamily contemplate the brown cattle browsing in the lush marshes. Ere long he will imagine himself incorporate in those quiet forms, and for a moment realise their pure animal existence made up of happy, unreflective sentience.

In the evening, when the sun sinks low, he will find another and more melancholy calm. Wandering over the spacious common, he may watch the slanting ray give a more vermilion hue to the tufts of heather blossom, or transform with alchemist skill the long yellow grass into gold, or finally throw a ruddy glow on the brown sail of a distant smack. It is not only on the west coast, he reflects, that the sinking sun has his mystic splendours. It is something to see the heather and yellow flowers topping the cliff all ablaze with his fire while the cliff itself and beach are in cold shade; something to turn from the chill expanse of sea, over which the gloom of night is beginning to settle, and watch the warm hues lingering in the western sky. A deeper mystery is given to the recurring wonder by the proximity of a clump of bent and twisted firs, which stand up above the level of the common, sharply and minutely defined in their unrelieved blackness, suggesting vague images of super-human suffering and Godlike resistance.

Later on, when the mystic beauty of the departing sun has vanished, new and yet more impressive marvels await him. Standing on the lonely beach, he may watch the full orb of the moon rise above the dark expanse of sea, gradually extricating herself from her cloud vestments and showing herself in her naked beauty. And now the black surface, but just now robbed of all light, shows an ever-widening path of silver sheen, across which pass, distinct in their intense blackness, the tiny forms of distant ships. In spite of knowledge of optics, he cannot resist the pleasing illusion that at this moment the weary mariner is intoxicated by a sudden transition out of Stygian darkness into this white effulgence. Turning his eye nearer the shore, where the silver path contracts to a point, he watches the beam grow wanton, throwing itself in a shower of momentary lustre of silver and gold on the ridges of the waves. Returning by the cliff, he will not fail to linger a moment or two by the ruins of the church, the grey stone of which now takes on a ghost-like hue. He has a vague sense of some mystery attaching to these relics of the past. How, he asks himself, came these ruins here so near the brow of the cliff?

A place, no less than a man or a woman, is the more interesting for having a history. There are faces which fascinate us by undefinable suggestions of a past full of deeds of kindness, it may be, or of heroic endurance. A town, a village, may wear the same kind of charm. These ruins, here at Dunwich, haunt the mind; they throw it back in a movement of retrospective inquiry, which harmonises perfectly well

with the mood of dreamy contemplation otherwise induced. Nor is it the ruins only which suggest a past worth inquiring into. There are other features of the place which seem out of keeping with its retiring, village look, and which speak of another and wholly unlike order of things. On a board above the cliff one spies a notice, which years of rain and sun have done their best to efface, headed "Borough of Dunwich." In the village itself, among the two or three old houses, is a whitewashed cottage with Gothic casements, looking much like a modest conventicle, which turns out, on inquiry, to be a town hall. Nor is it only the empty dignity of the name of borough which Dunwich wears. It actually discharges some of the functions of a municipality. On a certain day in September the visitor may notice a number of gentlemen arriving at the inn, and entering the modest town hall. These are honourable burgesses about to perform one of their most solemn duties: this is the election of next year's bailiffs, a pair of officers who here answer roughly to the mayor of other boroughs. At first the visitor is struck by the grotesque incongruity of the thing. A sweet rustic village like this, the embodiment of Arcadian simplicity, the sanctuary of peace, trammelled with the forms and the duties of a municipality! Yet, when taken with those venerable ruins up there, the municipal rank ceases to be ludicrous, and yet further stirs the mind with a sense of an unexplored past. A visit to the town hall, under the friendly guidance of a leading councillor, confirms the conviction that Dunwich has had its memorable history. Here stands an ancient iron chest, of Dutch workmanship, where are deposited the archives of the village borough. A truly wonderful safe this, with Dutch paintings on its panels and an intricate system of bolts and locks, rendering the opening of it a matter which requires a lengthy apprenticeship, though it closes of itself in an astounding fashion. Here are documents reaching back to the days of good Queen Bess, and recording the several gatherings, doings, and disbursements of the corporation. So much is certain, then: Dunwich has been a place of some repute. But how did it sink into its present village condition? Did an invader pulverise away the older Dunwich, or did some fierce conflagration utterly consume it? These questions are not answered by the Dutch chest. For a full solution of the mystery we must have recourse to a small quarto volume, containing the history of Dunwich and neighbourhood. In order to follow this the better, we will first take a further look at the adjacent coast.

The finest coast scenery lies to the south. Here one may walk ten miles without seeing anything deserving to be called a village. There is a choice of walks along the edge of the cliff or on the beach by the strips of sand which are exposed towards low water. At the end of a mile or so we reach the heath, whose purple mantle is visible from Dunwich. Here the even level of the cliff, about 40 feet in height, is broken into furrows and bold rounded ridges, which seem to tilt over the beach. The overhanging edge, with drooping tufts of brown heather, suggests an



advancing brow overhung with shaggy locks. Here, in a small fissure of the cliff, one can obtain a good view from above of its curious stratification. Almost immediately below the heather there comes a deep stratum of black-brown, peaty-looking substance. Then follow strata of various hues of ochre. The yellow, sandy-looking material is picked out here and there with patches of grey pebble, which take on a faint tinge of complementary blue. Seen from below they look like a kind of inlaid work. The cliff is evidently of a very fragile structure. Its base, consisting of a very soft, sandy material, is here and there hollowed out into shallow cavities. Between these the angle of cliff and beach is filled with masses of débris, smooth drifts of pebble, and piles of blackish-brown clods. Higher up, near the surface, the cliff is honeycombed by a myriad sand-martins, a flock of which is now wheeling about its holes. A stone thrown up from the beach against the inlaid work of pebbles easily dislodges a number of them, and produces quite a small avalanche of pebbles and finer shingly substance. A confirmation of the crumbling character of the cliff is supplied by the light grey streaks which are visible among the heather close to the edge of the declivity; these are plainly the remains of what was once a secure footpath.

In the midst of the heath, on a lofty plateau some distance from the cliff, stands a considerable coast-guard station. It consists of about six houses, all having their walls and chimneys carefully coated with tar, and presenting, with their dark grey slating, masses of decorous black, relieved only by a few touches of white paint on the woodwork. One thinks how excellent a thing life might be passed on this breezy eminence, with all the varying aspect of land and sea for the eye. But a talk with one of the coastguard men may somewhat subdue the wish to share their romantic-looking roost. It is a hard fate which compels a man to turn out of his warm bed on a January night, when the north-east wind shrieks through crevice of door and window, for the lonely beat on the dark, spray-drenched beach. The women seem even less in love with their abode than their hardy lords. They would any day hail with rejoicing a summons to migrate to some dirty, stuffy fishing town, counting the glories of their heathy plateau as nothing against the substantial gain of cheaper supplies and a more diversified gossip.

Just beyond the coastguard station the breezy common dips down, in a series of graceful folds, to another low level. This point is called Misner Haven, though why a haven it is hard to see. Here we have, in place of the cliff, a stretch of low coast corresponding to that to the north of Dunwich, only wanting its pleasing curve. Inland, too, is a sweep of bright green marshes, intersected by dykes, whose course is marked by the darker and more bluish greens of the rushes and the browns of the sorrel bushes. Just inside the grass-tufted ridge of the beach, between it and a substantial earth-wall, lies a chain of stagnant pools, half choked with reeds. Here we once saw a successor of Isaac Walton casting his line; and though we, uninitiated in the piscatorial

craft, have frequently puzzled ourselves over the selection of waters by the London angler, our astonishment on this occasion was yet greater. A mile's trudge along the high bank, or over the now more sandy beach, brings us to a cluster of three or four quaint little cottages huddling close together just behind the dwarfish sandhills which here crown the beach. This is known as Sluice. A broad dyke, which roughly bisects the stretch of marsh land, here shoots into the sea the washings of many a square mile of low Suffolk land. The outflow is regulated by a large sluice, which is connected with quite an intricate system of dykes, pools, and dividing banks. A couple of windmills appear, by a kind of inverted undershed water-wheel arrangement, to lift the water from the lower to the higher levels, and finally into the escaping torrent. The whole place has a quaint Dutch look. The only other building near is the ruin of a house on the marshes, which is said to have been a chapel, and which looks a likely place for a meeting-point of will-o'-the-wisps or other sprites of the marsh, if such are to be found here. But chancing on it one warm August morning, we found it a pleasant and even a cosy place. It is ebb tide, and the waters are oozing sluggishly through the sluice gate. An old man, with bronzed face and bent figure, is storing up picturesque bundles of heather—for firing, we suppose. On our arrival he hospitably intermits his work, and comes and bids us take a seat by his side on a bench in the shadow of the cottages. A couple of frolicsome kittens are performing mimic assaults and struggles in the sun beyond. A woman or two come out of the houses, ostensibly for the purpose of fetching water or stretching clothes to dry, but not wholly uninfluenced, perhaps, by the attraction of the rare spectacle of a passing pedestrian. The old man has charge of the sluice, and he describes to us in the queer Suffolk idiom, to which a certain pungency is given by the frequent substitution of an emphatic "that" for "it," his winter experiences. Then, when the forces of rain, deluge, and stormy sea are combined against him, his work is hard enough. Sometimes he has to clear the sluice gate, which has been buried under shingle by the impetuous waves. At this bleak season the ridge of sandhills, with its little human colony, is but a narrow tongue of dry ground between two dark and threatening waters. Well may the women's faces lack merri-ment here, where the tenure of life is so ill secured!

Another mile along the beach brings us to a third human settlement, no less quaint in its way than Sluice. It bears on the map the name of Sizewell Gap, but the appellation is less obviously appropriate than that of Sluice; for there is nothing here but an unbroken line of shingly beach. It is only two miles from a little manufacturing town, and some of the townspeople, eager for sea air and finding no better accommodation, have built for themselves neat wooden chalets on the higher sandy terraces of the wide shelving beach. To these are added in the summer a number of gleaming tents. The gay settlement is oddly interspersed among rude fishermen's huts, one or two of which are inhabited.

The look of the place on an August morning is bright and pretty enough. The settlers seem to revel in their primitive mode of life, the younger portion leading very much the amphibious existence of unsophisticated tropical islanders.

A mile beyond Sizewell Gap lies Thorpe Ness, a low, sandy point, at which the coast line bends somewhat, but which has little of the look of a promontory about it; near it nestle among the sandhills and on the low ground behind the cottages of Thorpe village. The broad beach is thickly strewn with huts, winches, and boats; the country behind is flat and dreary enough. To complete the gloomy effect, the green of the marshy flats is soiled by a meandering stream, with shelving, muddy banks and broad, stagnant-looking shallows, utterly useless for navigation, and a striking emblem of a diffuse, superficial, and unfruitful mind. At this point only a mile of the coast separates us from the ancient borough Aldeburgh, whose pile of houses, crowned by its flint church, forms an impressive object after our long stretch of low and blank coast. Aldeburgh has its points of interest for the antiquarian; but compared with the rest of our coast line it belongs to the region of the known, and, as our voyage is into the unknown, its curiosities must be left unnoticed. And here we may look at our modest tour of investigation southward of Dunwich as completed, and may pursue the line of coast to the north.

Setting out from the cluster of boatmen's huts, we may follow the long curve of the bay either by the strips of sand on the low beach, if the tide is far enough out, or, adopting a more devious course, pick our way among the tracts of pebble and swamp behind the beach. By choosing the latter we may get a good idea of the unfamiliar weeds and wild flowers which flourish in these marshy regions by the sea, rank yet often handsome growths of which Crabbe gives us a picture.

Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom,  
Grows the salt lavender that lacks perfume;  
Here the dwarf saltworts creep, the septfoil harsh,  
And the soft slimy mallow of the marsh.

Two miles, which will be certain to weary the feet more than six of level road, bring us to the mouth of a narrow river. The entrance is flanked by two rude wooden piers, which form the extreme point of the coast visible from Dunwich. This is known as Southwold Harbour. Sitting on one of the benches of the pier, and looking west, we have before us a scene which well repays the somewhat dreary two miles' walking. On the left bank of the stream, at just the right distance from the eye for distinct yet comprehensive vision, stands the strikingly picturesque fishing village of Walberswick. Its cottages, seen end on, show a queer outline, one side of the high roof being carried nearly down to the ground, as if to save walling. They cluster together in groups separated by grassy spaces. Closer to the river, connecting it with the village, is a yet more striking cluster of boatmen's huts, their black sides crowned as usual by bright red roofs. Near these are one or two high-

arched wooden bridges which span the narrow dyke-like ramifications of the river. Behind the village rise the forms of a windmill, never long out of sight in this region, and a fine square church-tower. On the opposite bank are strewn in picturesque disorder the débris of many storms, here a group of old anchors, covered with rust, looking weary of their years of tugging and straining, and there the shapeless hulk of a fishing smack thrown over on its side, dishonoured and abandoned of men. Higher up the stream is a small quay, marked by another group of tall sea-roofed buildings, and a single vessel in front with that slight lean in her mast which tells that she is resting on *terra firma*.

The whole scene, the village and its surroundings, would be thoroughly Dutch-looking were it not for the noble tower. And on a moment's reflection we are pleased that that tower is there to check our paying the place a doubtful compliment by calling it "un-English-looking." Suffolk is the county of churches. As an old writer has it, "Norfolk exceeds Suffolk in the number of its churches, but Suffolk doth more exceed Norfolk in the handsomeness of them." And this Walberswick church is a very good specimen of their handsomeness. While the bulk of the church is reduced to a picturesque overgrown ruin, the high square tower stands sound and unimpaired, showing clearly its well-proportioned divisions, its carved parapet and turrets, and its long pointed windows. The church stands at the extremity of a fine sweep of heather-clad common. To the wanderer over these "walks," as they are sometimes called, in the evening light it forms a bold and impressive object. The varied outlines of tower and ivy-clad ruin are well defined against the soft grey sky which surrounds it and looks through its empty arched windows. The roof of a detached cottage or two not far from it just peep above the common, serving well to indicate the size and majesty of the tower. As the ray of the declining sun touches it, its grey stone takes on a purplish hue, its patches of ochre lichen grow ruddier, while the greens of the foliage overhanging the ruins brighten to a yellowish tinge. The effect is something like that of a faint flush of pleasure stealing over a venerable and wrinkled face at a child's caress. Here, too, the sense of a veiled past takes possession of the mind. This stately tower clearly bears no relation to the queer little village hard by. It seems to belong to some extinct order of things, and looks lorn and lonesome at the edge of the common.

Returning to the river, we find that our further progress is dependent on the goodwill of a venerable ferryman, whose arm is kept active in the summer months by the coming and going of visitors from Southwold, and whose task is by no means light when the spring tide gives added force to the current. This ferry, together with its ferryman, is perhaps the most curious feature of Walberswick. It happens to be a picturesque point of the river, and the view from the north bank, including groups of red-roofed houses of all heights, divided by masses of feathery foliage, and showing the church-tower behind, is a very pleasing one. A river

with a ferry and such a background is a treasure to the painter's eye ; and here may be found gathered, on a summer day, half a dozen or so craftsmen of the brush. Some of them are standing before their easels, giving ever and anon hasty sidelong glances at the opposite shore, but mostly intent on their canvas, now and then retiring a few paces and quizzing their work with head on one side and eyes screwed up. Others are sitting on camp-stools, bobbing their heads up and down in a comical manner. We have passed the place again and again, and can testify that cold winds are no obstacle to these indefatigable workers, and that they are wont to hold on with fierce tenacity till the gathering darkness blurs and confuses alike their subject and their picture. It has all the look of an art class working away at one model. It is clear from the look of the passers-by, who glance over the painters' shoulders, that they are at a loss to understand this enthusiasm for a low jetty covered with dirty sea-weed, a strip of a somewhat muddy stream, and a heap of tiled roofs. Our ferryman takes a more sympathetic view of the matter ; for he himself is officially connected with this school of art, being its frequent and well-approved model. And well he may be, for he is a noble-looking veteran, with form and colour enough in his tanned and wrinkled face, his tender blue eyes, and his curled grey beard to kindle desire in any painter's breast. We are not sure that he does not think more than is good for him of his many portraits, carrying his fame far and wide ; but he would be a severe moralist who grudges him this flattering reflection.

This river, named the Blythe, is, in spite of its flat surroundings, well worth exploring. These Suffolk rivers, winding about in their broad plains, give one an odd experience. The church-tower or windmill, which was just now behind us to our left, presently starts up in front of us to our right, till by-and-by we have a giddy feeling that our surroundings are pirouetting about our heads. Here on the Blythe the tower of Walberswick church plays a number of these pranks with us. The scenery is tame till we reach a varicose enlargement of the stream, which takes the form of an oval lake with a chain of rush-grown islands for its axis. On one side dips the Walberswick common, its slopes covered with solemn pines, through an opening in which one spies a charming keeper's cottage. In these pines herons may be seen roosting in the evening, their gaunt forms silhouetted against the glowing west. A mile or two beyond this point the stream brings us to Ilytheburgh, a village adorned with another of these handsome Suffolk churches. It is a lofty and elegant structure, with fine ornamental work on its tower, parapets, and buttresses. Its base stands some little height above the river ; and seen from here, surrounded by the lowly cottage roofs, it is commanding and even awe-inspiring. Its facing of flint and stone give it a hardy aspect, and one fancies as one gazes up at it that storm and tempest will never impair its perfect, clear-cut form. But this look of adamant strength proves to be treacherous, for the roof is said to be so unstable that the worshippers are

driven to seek refuge in some less inspiring temple. Here again one is struck by the disproportion between church and village. Blytheburgh is a quiet little place only a shade larger than Dunwich. Its retirement has not yet been disturbed by the contiguity of the tiny branch railway from Halesworth to Southwold. Quite an innocent invader this single line of tramway dimensions, which brings some ten times in the day its toy train, consisting of engine and two diminutive American cars. It is an easy-going, leisurely vehicle, and is quite ready to stop in the most accommodating fashion if it happens to be in the way of a cart, or even a perambulator, on one of the level crossings. There is about Blytheburgh, as about Walberswick, a look of old age and decay. These stalwart towers, with their scant remnant of human habitations, are like those rusty anchors on the banks at the river's mouth, which lie and watch the vessels they once served break up and disappear.

But we have strayed from our coast line, seduced by the placid current of the Blythe, and must retrace our steps. Leaving our aged ferryman and continuing north, we presently reach the town and borough of Southwold, pleasantly perched above a low cliff. Here again we are within the pale of civilization, and description must halt. But we cannot forbear to say a word about its busiest and most interesting suburb, the beach, which in places is a very thicket of boatmen's huts, winches, boats, and nets. Its shingle is ever rustling with movement. The most lively moment is when with the rising flood the returning boats shoot straight for the beach. The sea is merry with swiftly moving sails making for their respective berths. Men and boys lend a willing hand, and as soon as the boat grounds she is attached to a rope and hauled up high on the beach. Then comes the opening of the net and the sorting of the fish. It is as well not to accost the fishermen now, for peradventure they have toiled since daybreak, and have hardly anything to show but a few miserable little flounders and soles among a heap of rubbish, masses of collapsing jelly-fish, fierce little "wolvers" throwing out their inky, fan-shaped stings in a fine rage, and startled crablets making spasmodic movements in all directions on the chance of reaching less objectionable surroundings. One can easily forgive the look of disgust with which the refuse is cast back into the sea or trodden under heel. After all, these hard-working fellows take their disappointments as submissively as most people. A fine race of fellows these Suffolk fishermen, carrying in their very mien and attitude something of a noble gravity and philosophic composure which has been won from their perilous calling between the dark immensities of sea and sky.

The Southwold cliff is a very short one, and just beyond the last huts on the beach the coast sinks again to a low common. Here we notice the extremity of another of those long tentacles which the river Blythe throws out over the flat, marshy ground. This ramification appears to pass behind Southwold, reaching nearly to the beach, a quarter of a mile to the north of the town. Then follows another and longer line of cliff, loose and crumbling like the other, and altogether wanting in interest



(except, perhaps, to geologists), were it not for the ruin of a farm slanting on its edge. The building looks as though it had been cut in two by a landslip. This point is known as Easton Ness, though there is at present nothing to suggest beak or promontory. And here we may bring our little journey of discovery to an end. We have gone far enough, probably, to gain a rough idea of this flat Suffolk coast. Tame enough, no doubt, after the rocky battlements of Cornwall or the mountain barriers of North Wales, yet pleasing, too, in its unobtrusive fashion. And there is the fascination of history hanging about it. Everywhere we meet with echoes of the remote past. These archaic word-endings, "wick" and "burgh," these ruins of church and monastery, these relics of municipal dignity, carry back the mind to a far-off human life, other and more imposing than that which one finds now. Dull, desolate, *triste*, as it undoubtedly is to-day, we feel sure that it was once animated by a fuller and more energetic human life, that it was once shone upon by the ray of material prosperity. To what blighting forces has this former vigour succumbed—to the tardy process of industrial change, with its unpredictable caprices and its fine contempt for locality, or to some sudden and violent catastrophe?

The answer to the question is suggested by the coast line itself. These marshy flats defended by stout earthen walls, these loose, dissolving cliffs, this ruined farm on the very edge of the cliff, these inappropriate names, Sizewell Gap, Misner Haven, Easton Ness, all whisper of the ocean's effacing and transforming might. With this presentiment in our mind we turn to the old quarto volume already alluded to. It bears the title *An Historic Account of Dunwich, of Blytheburgh, and Southwold*. Its date is 1754. Its author, Thomas Gardner, deserves a passing notice. He was a salt merchant in Southwold who became so impressed with the ancient dignity and renown of the district that he devoted himself to the labour of compiling its history. And very thoroughly he seems to have done it, and very trustworthy is his record said to be. The good merchant historian lies peacefully between his two wives in Southwold churchyard. His tomb, with its quaint inscription, is worth a visit. A man who proves your noble lineage deserves your gratitude, and the Southwolders do well to be proud of their pious chronicler. This work, aided by one or two supplementary authorities, enables us to reconstruct the ancient configuration of this piece of coast, and to trace its successive changes. We learn that what is now an approximately straight line, shelterless and repellent, was some 400 years ago broken up into a succession of projections and havens. Then Easton Ness was indeed a beak, being the most easterly point on the whole coast.\* The high ground at Dunwich ran some six miles further into the sea, making the southern arm of a goodly bay. The river Blythe, instead of emptying itself into the "Southwold Harbour" by Walberswick, turned and flowed southwards inside the pebble range, finding an exit near where the lower

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\* This honour belongs now, we believe, to Lowestoft.

village of Dunwich now stands. And it made a brave haven here with the high promontory sheltering it to the south. Then too, it would appear, Misner Haven had its stream, probably the same which now empties itself by the sluice, and Sizewell Gap was a creek.\* The sea has for ages been steadily encroaching on this territory, washing away many thousands of acres of valuable soil, choking up havens, and altering the course of rivers, and last of all destroying the fair workmanship of human hands. Of this process of devastation Dunwich is the most signal instance. Dunwich had the favoured site to start with, and reached a greatness to which no other point could aspire, and Dunwich was exactly the point of the coast against which the sea's fury could most effectively hurl itself.

The high, projecting land which then lay beyond where the ruined church now stands seems to have attracted the eye of our warlike invaders at a very early period in our history. There is a good deal of evidence to support the supposition that the Romans had a station here. Nor is it difficult to understand how the keen-eyed warriors came to single out this site. Standing high above the sea, having, as our chronicler has it, "a fine beak every way;" screened on the south-east by a forest, and overlooking the mouth of the river, which at once served as a mode of approach for friends and a natural moat to shut out enemies—it offered a number of striking advantages. However this be, it is certain that the place acquired importance soon after the arrival of the German invader. The East Anglian kingdom figures but little in text-books of English history. It seems to have played a subordinate part in those fierce struggles between kingdom and kingdom which finally led to the union of the whole under the sway of one monarch. Yet it has a special interest of its own. It is thought to have been one of the first of the Teutonic settlements. It is conjectured too that, owing to its remoteness from the retreating bands of Celts, it exhibited the purest type of German, or, if the reader prefers, "English" life and institutions to be met with in the island.† According to the accepted story Christianity was introduced into the kingdom by King Rædwald (586–624), who had made its acquaintance in Kent. But it seems to have taken but little root till the accession of Rædwald's brother Sigeberht. He had been driven into exile by his brother, and during his residence in France had picked up Continental ideas respecting the value of religion

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\* A rough idea of this ancient configuration may be obtained from a map appended to Richard Brome's tract on Suffolk (extracted from his *Britannia*), which bears the date 1673. It is to be found in a volume of pamphlets relating to Suffolk in the British Museum.

† So Lippenberg, who observes that "in no other part of England do so many well-preserved German names declare who were there ancient lords or founders." But the new theory that the German invaders formed but a thin sprinkling among the existing Celtic population would perhaps ridicule this idea of a pure type of German life in the island.

and learning. Accordingly, on coming to the throne (circa 630), he sent for Felix, a Burgundian priest, to enlighten and christianise his pagan subjects. Sigeberht fixed on Dunwich, then known as Donwic or Denwyk, as his capital. Here Felix began to preach the Gospel, and made such way that he succeeded not only in building a church, but in founding a bishopric in the place, he himself being the first occupant of the see. In addition to this he is said to have established a high school for learning, an institution which may perhaps be regarded as the first germ of one of our great existing universities. In this way, favoured and supported by the King, Felix made Dunwich a bright lamp in the dark East Anglian realm. From Dunwich religious zeal spread throughout the kingdom, leading to the building of many fine churches and the founding of some of the richest monasteries of the island. The end of Sigeberht was strange enough. Weary of temporal concerns, he followed the precedent of Frankish king and exchanged the crown for the monk's cowl. So listless did he grow concerning his kingdom, that even the ravages of that obstinate old pagan Penda of Mercia failed to call him out of his cell, and when at length he was forcibly brought out by his indignant subjects and set face to face with the enemy, he firmly refused to fight, and standing unmoved with a long white staff in his hand allowed the enemy to cut him down.

Dunwich was the seat of a bishopric for about 200 years, till the two sees of Suffolk and Norfolk were united. During this period it grew famous not merely as the capital of East Anglia but as one of the principal ecclesiastical centres of the island. Its reputation, we may be sure, extended through France and Italy, and there was probably a good deal of direct intercourse between the place and Continental ports. Throughout the greater part of the period of Saxon rule it held this high rank among English cities. But towards the reign of Edward the Confessor its greatness had begun to decline. The sea had already commenced its depredations and washed away palace of king and of bishop alike. At this time it was a burgh containing 120 burgesses, and paid ten pounds rent to the Crown. Between this date and the reign of William I. it had lost one-half of its lands. Under the Norman sovereigns it acquired a new importance as a trading and fishing port. The number of its burgesses had now reached the respectable number of 236, and it paid fifty pounds and sixty thousand herrings to the Crown. In the reign of Henry II. the town seems to have reached the zenith of its material prosperity. It was now a place of great note, and is described as "abounding with much riches and sundry kinds of merchandise." It paid in annual rental the goodly sum of 120 pounds, besides a heavy contribution in herrings. By all accounts it was a stately-looking town, having its sturdy walls with their handsome gateways, its quay, its numerous churches, convents, and hospitals. It is described in an old MS., bearing the date August 1590, as having been at the time now referred to "a towne of great and strong defence, environed with great

dykes and banks, with many sundry high hills about and within the same towne and libtie . . . in which banks and dykes were sundry gates for entrance and passage."\* How strong these defences were is attested by the following story. During the rebellion of Henry's sons the mercenary troops, with the Earl of Leicester at their head, essayed to take Dunwich out of the King's hand. "But when he came neere and beheld the strength thereof, it was terror and feare unto him to behold it; and soe retyred both he and his people." An idea of the wealth of the place at this period may be gained from the fact that on the marriage of Maud, the King's daughter, Dunwich paid an aid of 133*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, whereas Ipswich only paid 53*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*

Dunwich was a staunch supporter of John in his quarrel with the barons, in consideration whereof he created the town a free borough, remitted 40*l.* of its rent, exempted it from sundry tolls and customs, and finally bestowed on it the honour of being governed by a mayor and four bailiffs. How well the town still maintained its enterprising spirit and its vigour is shown by the services it rendered Edward I. in his war with France. The town of Dunwich, we are told, built eleven ships of war, well furnished with munition, and having for the most part 72 men apiece, and they maintained these ships at their own cost during the thirteen weeks in which they served. We know, too, that at this time it owned sixteen fair ships, twenty barks or vessels trading to the North Sea and Ireland, besides smaller craft for home fishing. Nevertheless its power was steadily declining, as may be seen by the successive remissions of rent. At the beginning of the reign of Edward III. it suffered a terrible disaster. Its fine port was completely choked up by a succession of heavy gales from the north-east. The river, deprived of its old outlet, forced its way through the pebbly barrier two miles to the north of Dunwich, thus reaching the sea much sooner than it used to do. This entrance must have been about a mile south of the present one. This, however, seems to have been but a temporary escape, for, as our chronicler phrases it, "the whole raunge of shingle assureth it no place certaine." It seems to have tried different points of exit, till, aided by man's hands, it settled upon its present exit.

Dunwich fought hard with fate, and kings innocent of political economy thought to avert the hand of destiny by feeble measures of relief. Thus we read of mandates sent by more than one monarch to the Sheriff of Suffolk, bidding him see that goods imported into the new port be sold as hitherto in Dunwich market. Mandates were also issued with a view to secure to Dunwich its ancient dues, tolls, and customs. Such royal decrees were futile enough over against the higher fiat of inexorable nature. Dunwich was doomed to be brought low and to be effaced; yet it was long before her brave, sturdy sons could make up their minds to the fact. What made it harder was that other places

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\* Quoted by R. Wake in his work *Southwold and its Vicinity*.

in the neighbourhood, new upstart towns like Blytheburgh, Southwold, and Walberswick, were growing rich at her expense. The two latter places had directly profited by the destruction of Dunwich harbour. The date of Southwold Church, so far as it can be assigned with any certainty, bears out the conjecture that it began to be a prosperous trading port soon after this calamity had overtaken Dunwich. It was still sheltered by the far-reaching promontory to the north, which secured excellent refuge for shipping. While Southwold and Walberswick were thus profiting by the discomfiture of Dunwich, the Lord of Blytheburgh succeeded in depriving Dunwich of the shipping dues which royal warrant had sought to retain for her. The ancient city bore all this with difficulty, and there is a long record of plaint to the Crown and of legal conflict with the men of Southwold and Walberswick touching the new haven. Meanwhile new incursions of the sea still further impoverished the town. Gardner gives us a list of the principal storms which burst over the place. In the reign of Edward III. it lost, besides its harbour, a large part of its houses and a number of its churches. During the sixteenth century a series of storms attacked the town, undermining and overturning church, monastery, and wall, and leaving standing less than a quarter of the houses. The desperate burgesses, foreseeing the speedy downfall of church or market cross, made haste to strip it of all metal and other valuables that could be carried away. By the close of this century it wore a dreary and ghastly look. The writer of an MS. dated 1573 writes, "Excited by curiosity, I visited this place, when I beheld the remains of the ramparts, some tokens of Middle-gate, the foundations of downfallen edifices, and tottering fragments of noble structures, remains of the dead exposed, and naked walls divested of the ground about them by the waves of the sea."\* A century later Brome quaintly observes about it, "Through the renewal of the *Episcopal See*, the encroachment of the *Sea*, the decay of *Shipping*, and the secret fate that attends some old *Towns*, 'tis rather the remains of a *Town* than a *Town* properly so called." Gardner ends his gloomy record by a full and detailed account of a memorable storm which visited Dunwich in 1740. The hurricane lasted for several days. The adjoining marshes were overflowed and greatly injured by the sand and shingle thrown on them. Part of the old stone quay together with the pipes of an ancient aqueduct were laid bare. The Cock and Hen hills, standing forty feet high, "had their heads levelled with their bases." More hideous still, "the boundaries of the cemetery were naked, within which the secret repositories of the dead were exposed to open view: several skeletons on the ouze divested of their coverings, some lying in pretty good order, others interrupted and scattered as the surges carried them." In Gardner's time All Saints' Church, whose ruin still marks the site of the old city, was the only one left, from which it is clear that the encroachments of the

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\* This MS. has been attributed to Stowe.

sea since that time cannot have been considerable. If, as seems probable, the city had stood at the base of a projecting headland, we may infer that this storm completed the work of wearing away the promontory, leaving the line of coast pretty even as we now find it.

While thus shorn of her real strength, Dunwich has jealously held fast to her ancient forms of greatness. A new charter was granted the place in the reign of William and Mary, fixing its present constitution. It retained its ancient privilege (dating from the fourteenth century) of sending members to Parliament up to the memorable year 1832, when the claims of so many ancient boroughs were set at naught. And now there appears to be some talk of further stripping her of her ancient dignity. The corporation has the charge of certain endowments, lands that have been saved from hospital or convent, and according to modern ideas the management of these charities is a thing for commissioners to inquire into. Possibly there are good reasons for interfering with these mimic municipal doings. Nevertheless we should regret the extinction of the borough. It has its amusing side, no doubt, this village municipality with its town hall, its bailiffs, its assemblies, in which solemn resolutions are passed conferring the freedom of the place on some honoured head at a distance, and so forth. Still there is an impressiveness about the very shadow of departed greatness. There is a pathos in these quaint civic customs, just as there is in the faded and mouldy garment which has long survived its royal wearer. They carry back our imagination to the fair and famous city which once lifted its head serenely above where the breakers now make their monotonous beat.

The old salt merchant's story leaves the mind pensive "revolving many memories." The complete effacement of the East Anglian capital, even to the removal of its site, strikes and fixes the imagination. If a fragment or two of that royal palace, those proud gateways, or that market cross were still standing, a palpable evidence of the place, the effect would be different. A sense of reality would be given to the thing, and the intellect would have something definite as a starting-point in seeking to reconstruct the past. At the same time there would be wanting that profound impression of annihilation, of man's impotence when nature chooses to show her teeth, of the evanescence and nothingness of all things human. There seems a sardonic irony lurking in the smile of those summer waves there below the cliff, looking as though they could never find it in them to harm the frailest of mortal things. But presently as we ponder the capricious currents of reflective feeling take a new direction. After all what matters it that a city belonging to another cycle of human experience should thus have been clean swept away? It is enough perhaps that this pile of ruins overlooking the fair city's watery tomb should remain as its most appropriate of cenotaphs. The new-fledged village below, with its clean, wholesome look, is a happy image of the new order of things, an order the superiority of which few students of history can doubt. If we look more closely we

see that there is no incongruity in this spruce modern village with its coastguard station and school springing up here under the ruins of the ancient burgh, and assuming its very name. Nor is there any unseemliness in our pillowing our jaded London brains in indolent reverie on the soft sward here, just where perhaps the zealous Felix thrilled the blood-stained pagans with the Church's urgent summons. Our month's idle sojourn in this retired village may, perhaps, be as true a fulfilment of life's duties in this overworked nineteenth century as the withdrawal of monk to his lonely cloister a thousand years ago.

J. S.

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## Poets and Nightingales.

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MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD in his recent elegy on "Poor Matthias," the pet canary, laments the unhappy lot of birds, who never find,

Do all they can,  
Passage from their souls to man.

If this be so, it is certainly owing to no lack of interpreters, for almost every poet has made devoted attempts to translate their various melodies. Perhaps the original strains are still the most expressive to those who have music in themselves; but in many cases the poet seems to out-sing the bird, and to give a deeper meaning to her utterance.

This is especially true in the case of the nightingale, who enjoys the happy distinction of being the poets' favourite. Her chief rival in their good graces is, perhaps, the eagle, with whose royal aloofness, however, only the kings of men can fully sympathise. The stock-dove's "homely tale" was dear to Wordsworth; but, as Shelley said of the skylark's rapturous song, it is all too bright and good for this workaday world, and we miss the undertone of earthly passion. It is in the lingering evenings of early summer, when the soft brown air woos us with its quiet melancholy to forget the strain of life, and lulls without satisfying the heart, that the voice of the nightingale, breaking on the ear "from some grove nigh," never fails, by the contrast of its deep emotion with the general tranquillity, to wake an echo in every poetic nature. On such an evening Keats translated the bird's music into that "strangest, saddest, sweetest song" the world has ever heard—perhaps the most perfect expression in all literature of the sickness of hope deferred and unsatisfied aspirations, of

Infinite passion, and the pain  
Of finite hearts that yearn.

One need hardly apologise for quoting the dear familiar lines, which take a deeper pathos when we remember that the writer was then actually on the eve of death:—

Darkling I listen; and for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!

Still would'st thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown—  
Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that ofttimes hath  
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

This is the nightingale's crown of song—the truest and most tuneful note she has ever drawn from the heart of man. But from the days of Homer down to our own times her passionate strain has been echoed by almost every poet, in different keys of feeling.

The Greeks accounted for the "fiery heart" in that little body by legends which gave a human object to her lamentations. She was once a woman, Ædon, the wife of Zethus, king of Thebes, to whom she bore but one child, a son named Itylus. Now, Niobe, the wife of Amphon, her husband's twin-brother, had six sons and six daughters, and boasted of the number and beauty of her children, insomuch that Ædon was seized with jealousy, and resolved to kill the firstborn of Niobe's sons. But by mistake she slew in his stead her own son, Itylus. Then Zeus, taking pity, changed her into a nightingale, and in that form she continues to bewail her loss :

Even as when, in the new vernal hours,  
Couched in the covert of some leafy dale  
Green all around her with ambrosial showers,  
Pandarus' child, the sylvan nightingale,  
With lovely variations her sweet tale  
Trills beautifully well, and the woods ring  
With sorrow, while her boy she still doth wail,  
Itys, dear Itys, child of Zethus king,  
Whom blindly she cut off, and now doth sadly sing.\*

According to another story, the nightingale was once a princess named Procne, daughter to Pandion, king of Attica, and sister of Philomela. Her father gave Procne in marriage to Tereus, king of the Thracians in Daulis; but after she had borne him a son, Itys, Tereus kept her in concealment, and, feigning that she was dead, took Philomela to wife. The fraud was in some way discovered by the two sisters, and Procne, in a frenzy of revenge, slew her son Itys, and served up his flesh in a dish before Tereus. She then fled with her sister, and, upon Tereus pursuing them, prayed the gods to change them all into birds, whereupon Tereus became a hoopoo, Philomela a swallow, and Procne

\* Homer, *Odyssey*, book xix. 518 *sqq.*, Mr. Worsley's translation.

a nightingale. The names in these legends were, however, continually transposed, and the nightingale was more commonly called Philomela, while the name of the child is indifferently Itys or Itylus.

In the 'Birds' of Aristophanes, Tereus is introduced as a hoopoo, and says that Sophocles had reduced him to that condition in his tragedies, alluding to a lost play of that poet which turned upon the transformation. He is the King of the Birds, and sings to his Queen, the nightingale, a song which by the purity of its language defies translation. It is only equalled among the nightingale's poetical addresses by the ode of Keats. From an artistic point of view the Greek poem is superior to the English, but only as one sea-shell is more beautiful than another. The transparent and pearly grace of the former is indeed inimitable; but through the "twisted convolutions" of the latter one may catch a deeper murmur of imagination, a far-off moan of "perilous seas in faery lands forlorn," which will make it even dearer to the heart than the perfect Greek.

One of the most charming of Mr. Swinburne's earlier poems is based upon this legend of Itylus. The nightingale, whose constant heart is ever brooding over the old woe, rebukes—half in pity and half in scorn—the light heart of her sister, the swallow:—

O sweet, stray sister, O shifting swallow,  
The heart's division divideth us.  
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;  
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow  
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,  
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!  
The hands that cling, and the feet that follow,  
The voice of the child's blood crying yet  
"Who hath remembered me? Who hath forgotten?"  
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,  
But the world shall end when I forget.\*

This is the disdain of Antigone towards Ismene—of Romola towards Tito—the universal lament of the earnest and clear-sighted for the purblind creatures of the hour, the slaves of convention or of self. In the same spirit the terrible cries of Cassandra, in her prophetic agony before the murder of herself and Agamemnon, are compared by Æschylus to the nightingale's deep and persistent anguish:

*Chorus.* Distracted thou art, divinely stirred,  
And wallest for thyself a tuneless lay,  
As piteous as the ceaseless tale  
Wherewith the brown melodious bird  
Doth ever Itys! Itys! wail,  
Deep-bowered in sorrow, all its little life-time's day!

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\* *Poems and Ballads*, 'Itylus,' p. 62. Fifth edition.

*Cassandra.* Alas! O happy nightingale!  
 Some solace for thy woes did Heaven afford,  
 Clothed thee with soft brown plumes, and life apart from bale;  
 But for my death is edged the double-biting sword! \*

Never, surely was the leafy seclusion of the sorrowful bird more sweetly described than in that spiritual phrase "deep-bowered in sorrow" (*ἀμφιθαλή κακοῖς*)! It is paralleled only by Shelley's description of the poet "hidden in the light of thought."

The nightingale appears again as an emblem of deep and constant devotion in Catullus's poem to Hortalus after the death of his brother, admirably translated by Sir Theodore Martin :

Oh, is thy voice for ever hushed and still?  
 Oh, brother, dearer far than life, shall I  
 Behold thee never? But in sooth I will  
 For ever love thee, as in days gone by;  
 And ever through my songs shall ring a cry  
 Sad with thy death, sad as in thickest shade  
 Of intertangled boughs the melody  
 Which by the woeful Daulian bird is made  
 Sobbing for Itys dead her wail through all the glade.†

Sophocles, "singer of sweet Colonos, and its child," tells how the "feathered flocks of nightingales" (*πυκνόπτεροι ἀηδόνες*) loved his native home, especially in that passage which he is said to have recited to his judges when accused of dotage:—

Welcome, stranger! Thou art come  
 To the best and brightest home  
 In all this land of goodly horses seen;  
 To Colonos glistening white,  
 Where the tuneful nightingale,  
 Under dells of living green,  
 Mourneth sweetly all the night  
 With plaintive wail,  
 Amid the ivy-berries dark as wine.  
 Dwelling in the leafy grove  
 Where no mortal step may rove,  
 Where the sunshine falls not ever  
 Through the fruitage of the trees,  
 And the wintry tempest never  
 Stirs the charmed leaf with breeze—  
 There wild Bacchus roams for aye,  
 In joyous revelry,  
 Among the nymphs who nursed his youth divine.‡

This constancy of the bird to one favoured spot, and to one favourite tree or bush, has been often noted. Shakespeare, who seldom alludes to

\* *Æschylus, Agamemnon*, v. 116 *sqq.* Mr. Morshead's translation.

† *The Poems of Catullus*. Translated by Theodore Martin, p. 101.

‡ Sophocles, *Œdipus Coloneus*, 668-680.

the nightingale, and who makes Portia say that more than half the charm of her song is lent by the silence of the surrounding night,\* had evidently observed this habit, for Juliet tells her lover when he is called from her by the lark's morning song—

It was the nightingale, and not the lark,  
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;  
*Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree.†*

The poets have often attributed the sorrows of the nightingale to the loss of her young. Virgil compares with her song that of Orpheus after the loss of Eurydice:—

So Philomela, 'mid the poplar shade,  
Bemoans her captive brood—the cruel hind  
Saw them unplumed, and took them—but all night  
Grieves she, and, sitting on a bough, runs o'er  
Her wretched tale, and fills the woods with woe.‡

There is a story told by the Rev. J. Lambert, sometime Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, which shows how true to nature was the poet's description in this passage. He says that he once found the keeper of a toll-gate near Cambridge, and his wife, both plunged in a state of deep dejection, and, upon his inquiring the cause, he was told that a nightingale was in the habit of singing every night near their cottage; but some boys had stolen her young from the nest, and since her loss the mother-bird had mourned all night in a strain of such irresistible pathos that she had infected the gate-keeper and his wife with her own melancholy.

A reason more commonly assigned for the grief of "the gentle bird who sings of pity best," is that she is suffering from the pangs of love. We know how

The fancy sweet of Persia feign'd the love  
Of the voluptuous rose and nightingale;

and in English poetry she is "the love-lorn nightingale"—

The wakeful nightingale,  
Who all night long her amorous descant pours;

who

Tunes her voice to soft complaints of love,  
Making her life one great harmonious woe;

\*

I think

The nightingale, if she should sing by day,  
When every goose is cackling, would be thought  
No better a musician than the wren.—*Merchant of Venice*, V. i.

† *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 5. Contrast with this passage the following, from a poem attributed to Shakespeare in *The Passionate Pilgrim*:—

While Philomela sits and sings, I sit and mark,  
And wish her lays were tuned like the lark,  
For she doth welcome daylight with her ditty.

‡ Virgil, *Georgic* iv. 511-515. Translated by W. S. Landor, in *Dry Sticks*.

though the poet of the Seasons thought she ought to be happy enough if she only knew her own blessedness :

O nightingale, best poet of the grove !  
That plaintive strain can ne'er belong to thee,  
Blest in the full possession of thy love :  
O lend that strain, sweet nightingale, to me !

Chaucer relates a tradition that it is a good omen for lovers to hear the nightingale before "the sorry bird, the leud cuckow," and Milton has founded upon this superstition the most musical of his sonnets. Both poets complain of their bad luck, but they would seem to have been exceptionally unfortunate ; and lovers may comfort themselves that the chances are in favour of their hearing the nightingale some time before "the cuckoo's shallow bill." Indeed, Cowper had the extraordinary fortune to hear her "liquid notes" so early as "the foremost day of all the year," and welcomed them, in his dejection, as containing a presage of happier days :

Thrice welcome, then ! for many a long  
And joyless year have I,  
As thou to-day, put forth my song  
Beneath a wintry sky.

She is the sweetest of all summer's harbingers. Ben Jonson, translating with a touch of modern fancy one of Sappho's sweet stray verses,\* calls her "the dear glad angel of the spring." No superstition is needed to secure her a welcome.

In modern times a question has been raised whether the poets were right in calling her song so sad and mournful. She was frequently represented as the one exception to the general joy of summer :—

Everything did banish moan,  
Save the nightingale alone.  
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,  
Lean'd her breast against a thorn,†  
And then sung the dolefullest ditty  
That to hear it was great pity.  
Fie, fie, fie, now would she cry—  
Tereu, tereu ! by and by ;  
That to hear her so complain  
Scarce I could from tears refrain,  
For her grief so lively shown  
Made me think upon mine own.  
—Ah ! thought I, thou mournest in vain,  
None takes pity on thy pain :  
Senseless trees, they cannot hear thee,  
Ruthless beasts, they will not chear thee ;

\* ἡρος ἡμερόφωνος ἄγγελος ἀηδάν.

† Compare Mrs. Browning, *The Lost Bower* :—

Never nightingale so singeth :  
Oh ! she leans on thorny tree !



King Pandion, he is dead,  
 All thy friends are lapped in lead :  
 All thy fellow-birds do sing,  
 Careless of thy sorrowing.  
 Even so, poor bird, like thee,  
 None alive will pity me.\*

Chaucer, indeed, speaks of the "merry nightingale," but he also has "the merry organ of the mass," meaning the solemn church organ; and, in fact, the epithet did not then convey its present meaning, but was applied to any hearty and strenuous effort. The first attempt to refute the popular opinion that the nightingale is, as it appeared to Milton's pensive man, a "most musical, most melancholy bird," is to be found in Coleridge:—

A melancholy bird! Oh idle thought!  
 In Nature there is nothing melancholy.  
 But some night-wandering man, whose heart was pierced  
 With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,  
 Or slow distemper, or neglected love,—  
 (And so, poor wretch, filled all things with himself,  
 And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale  
 Of his own sorrow,) he, and such as he,  
 First named these notes a melancholy strain;  
 And many a poet echoes the conceit.†

And again in the same poem he says—

'Tis the merry nightingale,  
 That crowds and hurries and precipitates  
 With fast thick warble his delicious notes,  
 As he were fearful that an April night  
 Would be too short for him to utter forth  
 His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul  
 Of all its music!

The belief that "in Nature there is nothing melancholy" followed naturally from Coleridge's subjective view of the outer world—that

We receive but what we give,  
 And in our life alone doth Nature live:  
 Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!  
 And would we aught behold of higher worth  
 Than that inanimate cold world allowed  
 To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,  
 Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth  
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud  
 Enveloping the earth—

\* Richard Barnfield, "As it fell upon a day"—an ode falsely attributed to Shakespeare in *The Passionate Pilgrim*.

† Coleridge, *Sibylline Leaves*, "The Nightingale: a Conversation Poem," April 1798. Hartley Coleridge has a poem on this "discovery" of his father ("The Nightingale," vol. ii. p. 86). He speaks of him as "a mighty bard" who on this occasion found out "that mighty poets may mistaken be"—an irresistible suggestion of the old logical puzzle of Epimenides the Cretan!

And from the soul itself must there be sent  
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,  
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!\*

But to those who lean to the Nature-worship of Wordsworth, loving every form of life, and sympathising with the joys and sorrows which all lower creatures share with man in the general struggle for existence and development, these lines of Coleridge will seem to savour of heresy, and to have no excuse save the ever-valid plea of beauty. They would rather suggest that the nightingale's song is infinitely various, and that it is compounded of many emotions, some pleasing and some sad, so that

In the mid-most heart of grief  
Her passion clasps a secret joy.

And they would quote the verses in which Hartley Coleridge gives expression to this view :—

'Tis sweet to hear the merry lark,  
That bids a blithe good-morrow ;  
But sweeter to hark, in the twinkling dark,  
To the soothing song of sorrow.

Oh nightingale ! what does she ail ?  
And is she sad or jolly ?  
For ne'er on earth was sound of mirth  
So like to melancholy.

The merry lark, he soars on high,  
No worldly thought o'ertakes him ;  
He sings aloud to the clear blue sky  
And the daylight that awakes him.

As sweet a lay, as loud as gay,  
The nightingale is trilling ;  
With feeling bliss, no less than his,  
Her little heart is thrilling.

Yet ever and anon a sigh  
Peers through her lavish mirth ;  
For the lark's bold song is of the sky,  
And hers is of the earth.

By night and day she tunes her lay  
To drive away all sorrow ;  
For bliss, alas ! to-night must pass,  
And woe may come to-morrow ! †

Her song, however, generally expresses a passion so intense that it cannot be analysed into any cheaper emotions. 'It burns into the heart of Bianca, in Mrs. Browning's poem, the remembrance of her own fierce Southern love :—

We scarce knew if our nature meant  
Most passionate earth or intense heaven.  
The nightingales, the nightingales !

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\* Coleridge, *Sibylline Leaves*, "Dejection: an Ode," iv.

† Hartley Coleridge, vol. i. p. 57. Moxon, 2nd edition.

We paled with love, we shook with love;  
 We kissed so close we could not vow;  
 Till Giulio whispered, "Sweet, above  
 God's Ever guarantees this Now."  
 And through his words the nightingales  
 Drove straight and full their long clear call,  
 Like arrows through heroic mails,  
 And love was awful in it all.  
 The nightingales, the nightingales! \*

At the end of the poem, Bianca is almost maddened by the bird's persistent repetition of an anguish so like her own, and cries out—

Oh owl-like birds! They sing for spite,  
 They sing for hate, they sing for doom!  
 They'll sing thro' death who sing thro' night,  
 They'll sing and stun me in the tomb!  
 The nightingales, the nightingales!

With all this fiery passion there seems, moreover, to be some artistic feeling in the bird. It has been remarked that she usually selects for her song a place where there is a good echo. She also seems to share the proverbial jealousy of artists. "Nightingales," says Pliny, "emulate one another, and the contention is plainly an animated one. The conquered often ends its life, its spirit failing sooner than its song." Nay, they will not brook a human rival. The story of Strada's nightingale, as told in Latin by Vincent Bourne, and by Cowper in English, is well known:—

The shepherd touched his reed: sweet Philomel  
 Essayed and oft essayed to catch the strain;  
 And treasuring, as on her ear they fell,  
 The numbers, echoed note for note again.

The contention which ensues leads to a fatal end:—

She dared the task, and, rising as he rose,  
 With all the force that passion gives inspired,  
 Returned the sounds awhile; but in the close,  
 Exhausted fell, and at his feet expired.

Tennyson represents her, however, as secretly owning to herself the superiority of the poet's song:—

The nightingale thought, "I have sung many songs,  
 But never a one so gay;  
 For he sings of what the world will be  
 When the years have died away.

And one of Mrs. Browning's allegories shows how the bird is indebted to the poet for the glory of her song:

Said a people to a poet: "Go out from among us straightway.  
 While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine.  
 There's a little fair brown nightingale who, sitting in the gateway,  
 Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of thine!"

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\* Mrs. Browning, *Bianca among the Nightingales*.

The poet went out weeping—the nightingale ceased chanting:  
“Now wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?”  
“I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,  
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun.” \*

Finally, when both man and bird are dead, the music left in the place

Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.

The fable may be construed literally. A halo of poetry has been thrown round this earthly minstrel by the love and tuneful worship of the heavenly poets. She has found a passage from her soul to man, and many an answering note is mingled with her native strain, giving it a richness and variety of suggestion that is not surpassed in any natural sound. Her song is thus, for the cultivated, in harmony with the noblest emotions—hope and remorse, devotion to the dead, and passionate love of the living. It trembles with the pathos of Catullus, and swells with the rapture of Keats. Like a voice from higher levels of life, it rings out the fateful warnings of an unheeded Cassandra against the littleness and tyranny of men, and then thrills us with such an exquisite tenderness of hope and love that “the nightingales awake” in our own hearts, and fill us with joy.

C. J. BILLSON.

\* Mrs. Browning, *The Poet and the Bird*.

## The Hill Tribes of Burma.

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THE ordinary idea of nomadic tribes is that they are a lazy, shiftless race, who wander about seeking pasturage for their flocks, and occasionally, like the Huns, Arabs, and Tartars, vary the monotony of their existence by waging wars of conquest on the peaceful, settled inhabitants of the cultivated plains. Nomads, therefore, on the whole bear but a very indifferent character. Such roving bands as the Kurds, Finns, or Gauchos are held to be, indeed, a little superior in civilisation to mere hunters or fishermen, but immeasurably below the dwellers in the lowlands, who support themselves by agriculture and manufactures. But this generalisation is apt to be mistaken in some cases. The hill tribes of Burma are cultivators of the soil, and gather in their harvests with much hard work and trouble, yet they are as homeless and doomed to roam as any Bedouin or Mongolian of them all. Rice can be grown on the fat plain-lands year after year with never diminished return, and no greater labour than is implied in turning loose a number of buffaloes or oxen to poach up the soft ground with their hoofs, as an easy substitute for ploughing; and later on setting the women and young children to plant out the young seedlings from the paddy nursery, an operation effected with a little knobbed stick and not incompatible with smoking a cigar. But on the steep hill-sides it is a very different matter. There the jungle grows fast and dense, and the torrent rains wash away all the soil that is not held together by the roots of vegetable growth of some kind. About the month of February the hill people have to set about clearing the jungle from the slopes near their temporary village. Year after year it is the same, for when one crop has been grown the worn-out soil must lie fallow for seven summers and winters before it will yield a harvest again. Therefore, when the cold weather is drawing to a close, each householder selects the patch which he proposes to cultivate and sets about cutting down the jungle on it. It is hard work in any case, but perhaps least so when the trees are very large. This would seem puzzling to an ordinary woodman, but is explained by the ingenious device of these experienced foresters. They cut a slight notch on the under side of the bottom row of trees, and proceed upwards, for the clearing is always on a slope, cutting gradually deeper and deeper into the stems, and leaving as a rule the smaller trees untouched, until they come to the top of the patch, where the tree-trunks are completely cut through and, falling on those below, snap them over, and so the whole acre or two of forest goes down with one great grinding crash. Even with this lightening of the toil it takes many days, but by the end of

April the jungle has been cut long enough to be dry and ready for burning. But still the anxieties of the cultivator are not at an end, and considerable judgment has to be exercised in even so seemingly slight a matter as choosing the time to set fire to the miscellaneous heap. The huge tree-trunks require a lot of burning, and often smoulder for long over a week. If the timber is fired too long before the rains come, the ashes become dry and light, and are carried off by the wind, so that a great portion of the fertilising element is lost, and only a very scanty crop is the result. If, on the other hand, the kindling is too long delayed, the rain comes and extinguishes the flames. Great half-charred logs cumber the ground, and the undergrowth becomes soppy and wet, and will not burn at all, and a more or less total failure of the harvest is the result, with most direful consequences to the farmer. This hill rice cultivation is therefore a terribly uncertain support, and yet there is little to replace it; for tea and coffee plantations, even if the tribesmen had the requisite skill and experience, would have but a very doubtful chance of success; besides that you cannot eat tea-leaves or grow fat on coffee-beans, and the lowland Burmans would hardly barter a sufficient quantity of rice, the staple of Oriental life, for such commodities, and the hill community would therefore probably have to starve.

But supposing all to go well—the mass of timber to be well burnt, the surface of the ground to be broken up by the heat, and the first rains to come immediately afterwards—there is abundance of hard work before the husbandman. The whole of the field has to be laboriously hoed with the rudely fashioned “mamootie” to mix in the ash manure, and then follows the sowing. In some few lucky places, found two or three times in the nomad’s lifetime, this may be done by scattering broadcast; but in the great majority of districts it is a far more toilsome matter. Holes have to be dibbled in the ground—not the soft slime of the plains, but obstinate mountain soil—and into each hole a precious grain of rice is dropped. After a short time, when the young plants have sprung up a little above the surface, Indian corn, cotton, and capsicums are planted in between the ridges, to serve as a last resource in case the paddy crop should fail; and near the frail bamboo house, run up in a sheltered place hard by, there are yams, their tendrils creeping over some logs laid there for the purpose, a row or two of sugar-canes, somewhat stringy and sapless in such uncongenial ground, and a score or so of betel vines to supply the leaf wherein to wrap the areca nut, the fragment of tobacco and cutch, and the *souppon* of lime which will, when chewed, furnish philosophy and resignation to the farmer if all does not go well. Even with the sowing the toil is not over. Occasionally the arid soil refuses to produce even one year’s crop without irrigation, and artificial channels have to be dug and conducted through the clearing, and infinite care is necessary to prevent the water from carrying off all the earth with it. Then a small hut has to be built on posts in the middle of the field, and some member of the family has to be perpetually



on watch there against birds and beasts. By day noisy flocks of buntings and screaming green parrots would fain devour the ripening grain, and by night herds of wild pigs would soon root up and destroy the whole field. In addition to this, if the rice is stunted in its growth the weeds are not. Two or three times during the summer the whole family has to turn out to rescue the corn from strangulation, and the youthful highlander is called upon at a very early age to learn botany enough to discriminate between young rice plants and tares. At length in September or October reaping commences, and the crop is gathered in and stacked up near the house in a sheltered place, where the wild mountain storms will not catch the stacks and scatter them over the hill-side. Threshing the grain out is not by any means the lightest part of the work. In the plains the lazy Burman places his sheaves in a double circle with the heads together, and his bullocks do the work for him, and he is not careful to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn the while he leisurely puffs a contemplative cheroot. But the hill men have neither buffaloes nor oxen, and must, therefore, patiently beat the ears against a log of wood, or humbly tread the paddy out with their own naked feet. The two methods are usually combined, for it is difficult to say which is the more wearisome and monotonous. Then at the end of the year, when at last the rice crop has been stored up, the hill men make visits to the low country, carrying down in long procession of Indian file betel nuts, fowls and pigs, wild honey and bees'-wax, wild cardamoms, and the like, wherewith to get themselves a little money, buy a little more rice perhaps, and some cheap cotton goods, and spare clothes against the cold weather, to supplement the poncho-like cloaks that the women weave for them from hill-grown cotton, comfortless garments with a hole for the head and clumsy folds reaching down to the knee. Now and then speculative Chinese pedlars toil up the mountain paths, with their baskets balanced over their shoulders on the bamboo sticks without which a Chinese coolie is useless; but there is small profit to be made out of the mountain wanderers, and such visits are looked upon as great events in nomad life, and Ah Gwan or Boon Tek, the Chinese packmen, newly set up in business as they are, will probably never make such ventures again.

Then after a short season of leisure, chequered by carousals as long as the "khoung" or "sheroo" lasts, heady liquors occupying an intermediate position between spirits and beer, and an occasional opium pipe, got from the poppies which grow without any tending, the end of January comes round again, and the whole labour has to be gone through once more on a new piece of ground. In the course of three years at most the villagers have usually finished the cultivation of all the land in the immediate neighbourhood of their settlement, and it is necessary to seek out "fresh woods and pastures new" in a very literal sense of the word. Sacrifices are made to the spirits of the forest, the hills, and the air; the wise man of the community pitches on a lucky day, and the elders are

sent out to search for a new locality. They separate and each goes his own way, prospecting until he finds a place which seems to him suitable. He takes a clod of earth and carries it back with him, and when all have returned each elder puts his clod of earth under his pillow at night, and awaits a favourable omen in his sleep. Next morning all the dreams are compared, and the most promising of these determines the site to which the village shall be removed. If an elephant, or a vulture, or any gay-coloured or unusual wild animal, figures in a dream, it is a good presage; so is a loaded cart or a can full of water, a dog or a goat eating, a man carrying meat or sugar. On the other hand, a goldsmith, a barber, a carpenter, a cotton cleaner, a smith, a tailor, are most ill-omened sights, on the principle that such handicraftsmen have nothing to do with the hill tribes, and suggest nothing so much as migration to the plains to escape starvation. An equally unlucky vision is a widow or a corpse, an empty jar or a man carrying weapons of any kind, butter, oil, or milk. Such details have to be carefully considered, for it is very seldom that the elders dream dreams bearing obviously on the shifting of the village, and it is necessary to seek a sign in the other manifestations. Very knotty points occasionally turn up, as when the dreamer sees a heavily-loaded cart, but the vehicle capsizes, or has a vision of a dead body surrounded by vultures. The good has then to be weighed against the bad, and "leading cases" have to be adduced, a book of which precedents every wise man of any credit always has about him. The estimation in which the vulture is held, it may be mentioned, arises from the fact that he is a good Buddhist, and never takes "the breath of fleeting life," but prefers to live in ascetic fashion on carrion. If none of the dreams give hope, or point exclusively to any particular place, the men are sent to spy out the land again and seek inspiration as before. If the result is once more unsatisfactory, recourse is had to another method. A fowl is cooked with great solemnity, and the pioneers sit down to eat it together. It does not take long to get through it. The bones are picked quite clean, and are then broken in pieces and thrown into a basket or an earthenware jar. Out of this each of the elders takes a fragment after the village diviner has recited some "mantras" and incantations over it. The man who draws out the largest piece of bone is designated as he who is to lead out the people, and the place he has hit upon is adopted for the new settlement. The few household goods are soon gathered together, the village is broken up, and the whole community sets out to the new site thus chosen. New huts of wattled bamboo with thatched roofs coming close down to the ground are run up in a day or two, and then the available rice-land—now dense forest—is allotted among the householders, or if, as is more frequently the case, the soil is cultivated in common, the leader assigns to each his particular share of the work and everything goes on quietly and peaceably. The sept seldom wanders very far from its original range of hills. The nomadic changes usually take place up or down the course of some mountain stream, from which fish can be

obtained to eke out a scanty livelihood, and the clan as often as not takes its name from this stream. Thus, as there is no semblance of literature, or even in most cases of a written character, the dialects are constantly changing, and the *patois* of one settlement is often quite unintelligible to the dwellers in a village only "three hills off," according to the graphic phraseology of mountain reckoning.

When they enjoy happy seasons, these nomads—Karenns, Chyens, Kyaws, Kyoungthahs, Tounghthahs—know nothing whatever of the regular worship of higher beings. As they pass through the jungle on a hunting or trapping excursion they may here and there tie down the tops of a shoot of bamboo and deposit a few humble offerings of fruits and flowers to the "nat" guardian of the place; but there is no regular, systematic worship, though the fear of the spirits is always on them. When, however, bad times come, they ascribe it to the anger of the demons, either at neglect or on account of some particular offence, and they seek to propitiate the offended spirits with a more organised worship. The two spirits most regularly revered are the "nat" of the jungle and the "nat" of the village. For the former, in seasons of public calamity, such as famines or long-continued drought, a little hut is periodically built in the forest, a gaudily-dressed wooden image is sometimes set up, and sacrifices of fowls, offerings of lamps, fruit, flowers, and cooked rice are made for a time, with many prostrations and muttered prayers. The headman of the village and of each separate household—for the system of *patria potestas* universally prevails—directs all the arrangements of the worship, and the reverence paid for the time is very great, and becomes the occasion of a continued festival. Nevertheless, though the worship is thus casual and interrupted, there is a constant fear of the demons, and a desire to propitiate them whenever it can be done without too great trouble and expense. When a new clearing is made, a couple of trees or so are always left standing by each party of woodmen. This is for the habitation of the spirits, the fauns and satyrs of the place, who would otherwise be rendered homeless and would wander about incessantly, a dangerous enough proceeding in itself, but rendered tenfold more so by the feeling of resentment which must inevitably be smouldering in the bosoms of the evicted "nats." Such wandering spirits have been frequently known to fall upon the lonely wayfarer in the forest paths and shake him so violently that he has either died on the spot or has had his brains hopelessly confused and muddled up for the rest of his life. Such dire contingencies are provided against as far as possible by the expedient of leaving a few trees from each strip of jungle felled, into which the dryads may retire and find a home. A superstition of a like character is said to be still found among the Lithuanians, who are particularly careful not to cut down their corn-fields to the last stalk when they are harvesting. In the last few stems left Rugia Boba, the corn mother, dwells; and if she were left homeless famine would probably be the lot of the recklessly greedy agriculturist.

The Saxons have also a similar regard prevalent among them for this latter-day Ceres—a middle-aged, somewhat unpoetical dame, whom they call Mother Gode or Mother Harke. But the hill tribes believe not merely in one spirit of the forest, but in many. In fact, every great tree is almost certain to have its indweller. Not only the foliage and the tree-tops, but the stems and the roots are inhabited, and the trunks in the depths of the forest are as likely to harbour their "bongas," or ghosts, as the fringe of trees left standing round about the village. These "bongas" are disturbed if leaf, branch, stem, or root is harmed; how much more then if the whole tree itself is actually hewn down and burned? The Buddhism of the plains, with its lordly pagodas and temples, that cannot fail to impress the semi-savage mind, aids in keeping up this belief of the hill spirit-worshippers. Under the sacred "bawdee" tree the Buddhas attain to their supreme wisdom, and each succeeding Buddha has his own special tree. That sacred to Shin Gautama, the Buddha of the present dispensation, is the "nyoung-bin," the *Ficus religiosa*, the noble banyan tree. When a twig or a leaf is broken off the sacred tree, whether by an unlucky mischance or for purposes of worship, the ordinary lower-class Buddhist believes that deprecatory sacrifices must be offered up, and pardon sought for the offence. In some districts, and especially in China, it is customary to scratch letters and phrases on the trunk to apprise the spirit of what has been done, and to beg pardon for the offence. This reverence paid to trees by the adherents of another form of faith naturally tends to confirm the hill men in their superstitions, and however much they may be impressed with awe and admiration by the temples and gilded shrines of the plains, they are inclined to regard them as only another falling away from the primæval faith belonging to those who live high up in the mountains, near to the sun and moon and stars, where the great spirits live, and whence came the first inhabitants of the earth. The lowlanders, they say, are the descendants of the mountaineers, and have degenerated in many respects from their progenitors, but in nothing so much as in the secondary regard they have for the spirits of nature.

Of these spirits there are naturally very many, and it is fortunate for the tribesmen that the nats of the trees are comparatively inferior satyrs, for his whole life is spent in encroaching on the domains of these touchy personages. To obtain land for his crops the forest must be cut down, and the half-dozen trees or so that are left standing afford but a scanty sanctuary for the demons, who at the best of times are very restless creatures, and little likely to submit tamely to a curtailment of their liberties. While, therefore, paying all the respect he possibly can to the jungle nats, as being most directly brought into contact with them—all the respect he can, that is to say, consistent with yearly making inroads on their domains—the hill man is especially careful to reverence the other demons who haunt hills, rivers, lakes, earth and air, villages, and even each separate individual. Some, like the Khasias, reverence particular hill-tops and rocky clefts, into which the spirits of the night descend and

hide themselves away, and this is particularly the case with those hills where, according to a widely-spread custom, the dead are buried. Among the Karens there is a particular hill, the Natulloo, the peak of the Beeloo, man-eating ogres, which not a man of them could be prevailed upon to ascend, no matter on what temptation. Others, again, like the Khumis, worship the earth as the author of all that they possess, and also the sun in its noonday height as the pledge of their safety from foes; or, like the Khurka Khol, join it with the moon and regard the stars as their children. As a rule, however, the only visible places for worship in the mountain villages are the two or three trees left standing when the forest is cleared away. Offerings of fruit and flowers and cooked meats may occasionally be seen deposited near these for the regaling of the nats, and now and then branches are tied down to specially attract the attention of the spirits; but it is rare to find actual shrines constructed, such as may be seen outside almost every small Burman village, where an attempt is made to furnish a visible representation of the demon, and a little thatched house is built, under a pent roof or up in the branches of a large tree, for his habitation. Sometimes the village guardian spirit is localised for the sake of sacrificial convenience, as the Khonds reverence the Nadzu Pennu, the hamlet spirit, in the form of a stone under a cotton tree, or as the Kyaws place in different quarters, usually at opposite ends of the village, upright stones consecrated to the nats of the neighbourhood. Of these two nats, represented by the stone pillars, one, the male one, the "ywasoung nat," guards the village, the other, the female, presides over the river Mayoo, the stream which figures so curiously in many Oriental superstitions, reminding one of the Styx, and concerning which so little information is to be got from those who none the less firmly believe in it. But these spirits thus directly revered by the villagers are not really held in any greater estimation, nor are they more dreaded than any other kind of nats. They are only thus honoured because, like the jungle spirits, they are in constant residence, and therefore more likely to do harm when annoyed than any of the other demons. None of the nats, in fact, are held in anything like religious regard. The worship is deprecatory more than anything else. No one wants their presence. If there were any method by means of which they might be got rid of, it would be forthwith adopted, for the spirits never do any good except in the negative kind of way of preventing others of their kind, or stranger human beings, from encroaching on their domains and possibly doing harm. Consequently the religious sentiment never develops itself very strongly. It is only when epidemics or bad seasons come that the hill men exert themselves to any great extent to propitiate their spiritual neighbours, or when they are on a journey in a strange country and do not know what ghosts and aerial wanderers they may come across and disturb in their haunts. Then they bestir themselves and make offerings and mutter prayers, not with the view of invoking any one's protection, but merely with the hope of quieting the demons and keeping them out of the way.

Some of the methods adopted with this object are rather awkward in their consequences for visitors, unless these are acquainted with the habits of the tribesmen. Thus among the hill Karenns—some of whom are extremely fiery and stalwart individuals—when an epidemic breaks out in a village, all the other neighbouring settlements establish an elementary kind of quarantine, to break through which entails very unpleasant consequences on the offender. The hill and forest paths leading to the afflicted village are blocked up in a loose kind of way. A beam is slung across the track, and to this is suspended a heavy stone. Any one passing over this log barricade would have to pay the penalty with his life, unless he was able to buy himself off with the weight of the stone in gold, an exceedingly improbable contingency in the case of most mountain wayfarers. This custom is still to be met with in some out-of-the-way parts of the British province of Tenasserim, and Captain Low tells us that he once found himself in a dilemma of this kind. Like most law-breaking Englishmen in foreign parts, he however got off free. He declined altogether to pay anything at all, and the hill men wisely concluded that the endeavour to exact his blood would be almost as dangerous as to risk the infection, which it is satisfactory to relate did not descend upon the villagers thus intruded upon. Roving demons, who might just as readily carry the pestilence as human beings, are begged off at these log barriers by the depositing of offerings of the usual kind, mostly eatables, as being more likely to produce lethargy, or at any rate good temper, than flowers, a posy of which is, however, frequently very acceptable to the spirits, especially if it is made up of heavy-smelling orchids.

In not a few of the hill tracts there is an analogous custom observed, one which bears a strong resemblance to the rite called "genna" by the Nágas. Before the season for the commencement of labour on the hill clearings the whole village is shut up entirely, and no one is allowed either to leave or to enter the stockade which surrounds it. All the fires in the place are put out, and no cooking is done until the prescribed time, varying from one day to a week, has passed over. These lights are obtained from a "spirit fire," if the district is fortunate enough to have such a Will-o'-the-wisp-like phenomenon in its neighbourhood. If not, the wizard or spirit doctor of the community furnishes fire in mysterious fashion, and mumbles many "gátas" over it before the good wives are allowed to kindle the flame on the household hearth. Till this has been done any visitors there may be, though such apparitions are in most districts exceeding rarities on the cheerless hill-tops, are kept outside, and have to provide for themselves in the way of food and shelter as best they can. Fortunately for them the highlanders are not so inhospitable in their preparations as the Malays and Achinese, who scatter "ranjows" (sharp-pointed caltrops) on the paths and feather the long grass with barbed hooks which work into the flesh, or as certain negro tribes, who hope to make themselves inaccessible to demons by plentifully sowing the paths with thorns.



The worst kind of demon that can get into a village is the creature known among the eastern tribes towards Siam as "phi takla." These are spirits who have a ravenous appetite that can never be satiated, and swallow everything they come across with impartial avidity. To gratify their enormous appetites, and that they may be able to gormandise with two mouths instead of one, they usually take possession of a man and devour through his instrumentality. Where harvests are so small and so hardly won, it is not to be wondered at that such a glutton in the village is regarded as a public calamity, and immediate measures are taken to expel this devouring spirit from out of the man. The treatment is of the most drastic character, and the unhappy possessed personage stands a very fair chance of departing this life before the demon is got rid of. If he survives the prescriptions, internal and external, of the demon doctor, and is yet not delivered of the devouring fiend in his inside, there is nothing for it but to turn him out of the place and set him adrift to find out a locality where there are more eatables to spare. Englishmen under the influence of the keen mountain air are looked upon as particularly likely subjects for the attentions of the "phi takla." At any rate, they all of them have such remarkably healthy appetites that a glutton spirit could not do better than take up his abode in them.

Naturally when a man dies there is particular care to be taken what becomes of his spirit, for however easy-going an individual the mortal man may have been, experience has proved that his ghost may be an exceptionally testy, irritable creature, and may quite possibly develop modes of annoyance which the living man would have been the first to deprecate. This is made all the worse by the fact that, according to some opinions, each single individual has not merely one but four spirits in his person. These "bongas," when the corpse is buried or burnt, forthwith run away. The one that first reaches the deceased's house settles down there as a spirit of the domicile and has immediately to be propitiated. The other three then hurry on to the nearest monastery or sacred place, and the winner of this second race takes up his abode there as the "demon of the burying." The two that remain then set off pell-mell for the forest, where the quickest of foot installs himself as dryad or satyr; and the slowest of the four, typical of the wandering nomads themselves, who can find nowhere a permanent resting-place for himself, wanders about perpetually in an uneasy way and proves to be the most troublesome of the quartette. He is a ghost in genuine character, and being no doubt soured in temper by his want of speed, roams about in never-ceasing, uncanny restlessness, venting his spite on whomsoever he chances upon. It is these laggard, "unplaced" demons that especially haunt the forest paths and shake up the brains of luckless travellers who come in their way. Probably it is the fate that dooms them to wander about which makes them approach most in their character to the ordinary ghosts of other countries, such as might fall under the province of the Psychological Society, though that body, if it followed the hill tribes' advice, would probably leave them alone. These unpleasant spirits

are those of whom Servius tells us, and whom he does not fail to denounce as dangerous. "*Manes sunt illo tempore animæ, quo de aliis recedentibus corporibus, necdum in alia transiere. Sunt autem noxia.*" Thus a consensus of opinion stamps them as the most troublesome of the nats.

The Chinese hill tribes believe that man has only three souls, and these are more satisfactorily disposed of. One appropriately and conveniently remains in the grave, another takes up his position at the ancestral board, and the third roams about unrestrained in the spirit world and not necessarily upon earth. Many of the hill women are fond, as in India, of giving their dead child a dog, or (by dint of prayers and supplications) the departed soul of an old and experienced person as a guide, that the infant wanderer may not miss its way on the path to the spirit world. For this reason it was that the Mongolians sent slaves to accompany their dead princes. The Chinese, however, have a more humane idea. They believe that since it is likely that the dead man will be unable to find his way safely to the world of spirits, and may as probably as not stray from the right path, the kings of the under-world furnish him with a little devil to act the part of guide and servant to the newly disembodied spirit on its journey. The Poles used to have a notion of a similar kind, though they, like the Chinese, did not display it in such an unpleasant way for survivors. It was their custom to lay bears' claws in the grave, to serve the dead man as hooks with the help of which he might climb the great glass mountain. According to the common notion among the Karens, the dead renew as "*plu-pho*" in the world of *Plu*, under the sovereignty of the great king *Cootay* or *Theedo*, the occupations which they had followed while as yet mortals upon earth—a curious hint at the caste system of the Hindoos, which has no place with the Karens while they are alive.

Some of the tribes are so impressed with the dangers that may come upon them through departed spirits that they destroy their villages when the death of a grown-up person takes place, just as many negro tribes do with the house in which the dead man lived. It is, of course, a very simple matter with them where the houses are mere wattled shanties that can be restored in a day's time by a moderately industrious man. Where the houses are at all of a better and more substantial character, or where the community is fairly numerous, it is generally found quite sufficient to purify the house with the aid of a witch doctor and propitiate the new nats. Anything that gives very great trouble is much more speedily found out to be grossly superstitious than a measure which entails no great labour, while at the same time, being of a very obvious and extensive character, it seems likely to be efficacious. The destruction of the house or village is of course intended to get rid of the dangerous proximity of the departed spirits, who, according to the Laos and many other tribes, withdraw into a corner of the house where the death has occurred, and have a knack of making themselves extremely unpleasant unless they are well cared for. The Ho have an idea which is curiously at variance with the Western theories as to

the habits of ghosts. This semi-Chinese tribe aver that the spirits of dead men wander about during the day, but when night comes on retire to their homes in the most domestic possible way, for all the world as if they were good solid flesh and blood. Possibly this may be due to the difficulty of suddenly changing the habits they were accustomed to while yet they existed upon earth in the bodies of men, and it may be only the newly enfranchised spirits that act in this way, though the Ho do not say so. The opponents of the destruction of villages to dispossess the nats have a very strong case in the argument that as long as the demons are in the houses one knows where they are, and is enabled to conciliate them with more or less success; whereas if they are ruthlessly evicted they wander about homeless and in an aggrieved state of mind, likely to be extremely dangerous to the luckless wights who come in their way, especially as the victims have not the means of finding out where to propitiate them, however respectful their sentiments may be. It seems, therefore, that house-burning will shortly be altogether abandoned as selfish and antagonistic to the public welfare.

Notwithstanding the troubles that may be caused by the departed spirit, the dead are not on the whole so badly treated as perhaps in countries where "first-class" and "third-class" funerals are to be had. There are a few "skeleton hills" in every district, where the dead are finally deposited and far from which the nomads never go. It is not always possible to inter a body there immediately. The death may occur in the busy seasons of seed-time or harvest, and the corpse is therefore buried temporarily anywhere near the village, and afterwards, when time serves, sometimes as long as several years afterwards, the bones are carried off to the sacred hill and there laid to rest with a few jewels or whatever valuables the deceased may have left behind. The ceremonial observed on these occasions is a tribal secret, and each community keeps the exact locality of its "skeleton hill" as far as possible unknown to strangers, whether of another village or of the plains. Ordinarily these hill nomads are meek, harmless, broken-spirited people, as different as possible from fierce Bedouins or raiding Mongolians. They are too hard-worked to have any time for interfering with their neighbours, and wish for nothing so much as to be let alone. In British Burma many of them are beginning to be tempted down to settled habitations on the lower slopes, or even in the plains; but in native Burmese territory, where they have had dire experience of district governors, whole villages occasionally die of famine and pestilence rather than risk themselves in the low country, where they may be seized and sold into slavery. Nevertheless, in spite of their weakness, whether for offence or defence, the hill tribes are proud enough, and look down upon the inhabitants of the lowlands as "Oukthahs," inferior people, "lower born" in the physical sense of the word, descendants of the hill men, and with no claim to their antiquity or to their nearness to the heavens, whence came the fallen spirits from whom all mankind are descended.

SHWAY YOE.

## Rossetti and the Religion of Beauty.

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AMONG those picturesque aspects of life which the advance of civilisation is tending to reduce to smoothness and uniformity, we may include that hubbub and conflict which in rougher days used to salute the appearance of any markedly new influence in science, literature, or art. Prejudice—not long since so formidable and ubiquitous a giant—now shows sometimes little more vitality than Bunyan's Pope or Pagan; and the men who stone one of our modern prophets do it hurriedly, feeling that they may be interrupted at any moment by having to make arrangements for his interment in Westminster Abbey.

Now, while it would be absurd not to rejoice in this increasing receptivity of cultivated men—absurd to wish the struggle of genius sharper, or its recognition longer deferred—we may yet note one incidental advantage which belonged to the older *régime*. While victory was kept longer in doubt, and while the conflict was rougher, the advocates of a new cause felt a stronger obligation to master it in all its aspects, and to set it forth with such exposition as might best prepare a place for it in ordinary minds. The merits of Wordsworth (to take an obvious instance) were long ignored by the public; but in the meantime his admirers had explained them so often and so fully, that the recognition which was at last accorded to them was given *on* those merits, and not in mere deference to the authority of any esoteric circle.

The exhibition of Dante Rossetti's pictures which now covers the walls of Burlington House is the visible sign of the admission of a new strain of thought and emotion within the pale of our artistic orthodoxy. And since Rossetti's poetry expresses with singular exactness the same range of ideas as his painting, and is at any rate not inferior to his painting in technical skill, we may fairly say that his poetry also has attained hereby some sort of general recognition, and that the enthusiastic notices which appeared on his decease embodied a view of him to which the public is willing to some extent to defer.

Yet it hardly seems that enough has been done to make that deference spontaneous or intelligent. The students of Rossetti's poems—taking their tone from Mr. Swinburne's magnificent eulogy—have for the most part rather set forth their artistic excellence than endeavoured to explain their contents, or to indicate the relation of the poet's habit of thought and feeling to the ideas which Englishmen are accustomed to trust or admire. And consequently many critics, whose ethical point of view demands respect, continue to find in Rossetti's works an enigma not

worth the pains of solution, and to deery them as obscure, fantastic, or even as grossly immoral in tendency.

It will be the object of this essay—written from a point of view of by no means exclusive sympathy with the movement which Rossetti led—to show, in the first place, the great practical importance of that movement for good or evil ; and, further, to trace such relations between this Religion of Art, this Worship of Beauty, and the older and more accredited manifestations of the Higher Life, as may indicate to the moralist on what points he should concentrate his efforts if, hopeless of withstanding the rising stream, he seeks at least to retain some power of deepening or modifying its channel.

From the æsthetic side such an attempt will be regarded with indifference, and from the ethical side with little hope. Even so bold a peacemaker as the author of *Natural Religion* has shrunk from this task ; for the art which he admits as an element in his Church of Civilisation is an art very different from Rossetti's. It is an art manifestly untainted by sensuousness, manifestly akin to virtue ; an art which, like Wordsworth's, finds its revelation in sea and sky and mountain rather than in "eyes which the sun-gate of the soul unbar," or in

Such fire as Love's soul-winnowing hands distil,  
Even from his inmost ark of light and dew.

Yet, however slight the points of contact between the ethical and the æsthetic theories of life may be, it is important that they should be noted and dwelt upon. For assuredly the "æsthetic movement" is not a mere fashion of the day—the modish pastime of nincompoops and charlatans. The imitators who surround its leaders, and whose jargon almost disgusts us with the very mysteries of art, the very vocabulary of emotion—these men are but the straws that mark the current, the inevitable parasites of a rapidly rising cause. We have, indeed, only to look around us to perceive that—whether or not the conditions of the modern world are favourable to artistic *excellence*—all the main forces of civilisation are tending towards artistic *activity*. The increase of wealth, the diffusion of education, the gradual decline of the military, the hieratic, the aristocratic ideals—each of these causes removes some obstacle from the artist's path or offers some fresh prize to his endeavours. Art has outlived both the Puritans and the Inquisition ; she is no longer deadened by the spirit of self-mortification, nor enslaved by a jealous orthodoxy. The increased wealth of the world makes the artist's life stable and secure, while it sets free a surplus income so large that an increasing share of it must almost necessarily be diverted to some form of æsthetic expenditure.

And more than this. It is evident, especially in new countries, that a need is felt of some kind of social distinction—some new aristocracy—based on differences other than those of birth and wealth. Not, indeed, that rank and family are likely to cease to be held in honour ; but, as

power is gradually dissociated from them, they lose their exclusive predominance, and take their place on the same footing as other graces and dignities of life. Still less need we assume any slackening in the pursuit of riches; the fact being rather that this pursuit is so widely successful that in civilised capitals even immense opulence can now scarcely confer on its possessor all the distinction which he desires. In America, accordingly, where modern instincts find their freest field, we have before our eyes the process of the gradual distribution of the old prerogatives of birth amongst wealth, culture, and the proletariat. In Europe a class privileged by birth used to supply at once the rulers and the ideals of other men. In America the rule has passed to the multitude; largely swayed in subordinate matters by organised wealth, but in the last resort supreme. The ideal of the new community at first was Wealth; but, as its best literature and its best society plainly show, that ideal is shifting in the direction of Culture. The younger cities, the coarser classes, still bow down undisguisedly to the god Dollar; but when this Philistine deity is rejected as shaming his worshippers, æsthetic Culture seems somehow the only Power ready to instal itself in the vacant shrine.

And all over the world the spread of Science, the diffusion of Morality, tend in this same direction. For the net result of Science and Morality for the mass of men is simply to give them comfort and leisure, to leave them cheerful, peaceful, and anxious for occupation. Nay, even the sexual instinct, as men become less vehement and unbridled, merges in larger and larger measure into the mere æsthetic enjoyment of beauty; till Stesichorus might now maintain with more truth than of old that our modern Helen is not herself fought for by two continents, but rather her *εἰδωλον* or image is blamelessly diffused over the albums of two hemispheres.

It is by no means clear that these modern conditions are favourable to the development either of the highest art or of the highest virtue. It is not certain even that they are permanent—that this æsthetic paradise of the well-to-do may not sometimes be convulsed by an invasion from the rough world without. Meantime, however, it exists and spreads, and its leading figures exert an influence which few men of science, and fewer theologians, can surpass. And alike to *savant*, to theologian, and to moralist, it must be important to trace the workings of a powerful mind, concerned with interests which are so different from theirs, but which for a large section of society are becoming daily more paramount and engrossing.

"Under the arch of Life," says Rossetti in a sonnet whose Platonism is the more impressive because probably unconscious—

Under the arch of Life, where love and death,  
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw  
Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,  
I drew it in as simply as my breath.



Rossetti was ignorant of Greek, and it seems doubtful whether he knew Plato even by translations. But his idealising spirit has reproduced the myth of the *Phædrus*—even to the *τρέφεται καὶ εὐραθεῖ*—the words that affirm the repose and well-being of the soul when she perceives beneath the arch of heaven the pure Idea which is at once her sustenance and her lord :—

Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,  
The sky and sea bend on thee ; which can draw,  
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,  
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.

For Beauty, as Plato has told us, is of all the divine ideas at once most manifest and most loveable to men. When "Justice and Wisdom and all other things that are held in honour of souls" are hidden from the worshipper's gaze, as finding no avenue of sense by which to reach him through the veil of flesh, Beauty has still some passage and entrance from mortal eyes to eyes, "and he that gazed so earnestly on what things in that holy place were to be seen, he when he discerns on earth some godlike countenance or fashion of body, that counterfeits Beauty well, first of all he trembles, and there comes over him something of the fear which erst he knew ; but then looking on that earthly beauty, he worships it as divine, and if he did not fear the reproach of utter madness, he would sacrifice to his heart's idol as to the image and presence of a god."

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise  
Thy voice and hand shake still—long known to thee  
By flying hair and fluttering hem—the beat  
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,  
How passionately and irretrievably,  
In what fond flight, how many ways and days !

There are some few hearts, no doubt, in which "sky and sea" and the face of Nature are able to inspire this yearning passion. But with this newer school—with Rossetti especially—we feel at once that Nature is no more than an accessory. The most direct appeals, the most penetrating reminiscences, come to the worshipper of Beauty from a woman's eyes. The steady rise in the status of women ; that constant deepening and complication of the commerce between the sexes, which is one of the signs of progressive civilisation : all this is perpetually teaching and preaching (if I may say so) the charms of womanhood to all sections of the community. What a difference in this respect has the century since Turner's birth made in England ! If another Turner were born now—an eye which gazed, as it were, on a new-created planet from the very bedchamber and outgoing of the sun—can we suppose that such an eye would still find its most attractive feminine type in the bumboats of Wapping ? The anomaly, strange enough in Turner's day, is now inconceivable. Our present danger lies in just the opposite direction. We are in danger of losing that direct and straightforward outlook on



human loveliness (of which Mr. Millais may serve as a modern example), which notes and represents the object with a frank enjoyment, and seeks for no further insight into the secret of its charm. All the arts, in fact, are returning now to the spirit of Leonardo, to the sense that of all visible objects known to us the human face and form are the most complex and mysterious, to the desire to extract the utmost secret, the occult message, from all the phenomena of Life and Being.

Now, there is at any rate one obvious explanation of the sense of mystery which attaches to the female form. We may interpret it all as in some way a transformation of the sexual passion. This essentially materialistic view is surrounded with a kind of glamour by such writers as Gautier and Baudelaire. The tone of sentiment thus generated is repugnant—is sometimes even nauseating—to English feeling; but this tone of sentiment is certainly not Rossetti's. There is no trace in him of this deliberate worship of Baal and Ashtoreth; no touch of the cruelty which is the characteristic note of natures in which the sexual instincts have become haunting and dominant.

It is, indeed, at the opposite end of the scale—among those who meet the mysteries of love and womanhood with a very different interpretation—that Rossetti's nearest affinities are to be found. It must not be forgotten that one of his most exquisite literary achievements consists in a translation of the *Vita Nuova* of Dante. Now, the *Vita Nuova*, to the vulgar reader a childish or meaningless tale, is to those who rightly apprehend it the very gospel and charter of mystical passion. When the child Dante trembles at the first sight of the child Beatrice; when the voice within him cries *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi*; when that majestic spirit passes, at a look of the beloved one, through all the upward or downward trajectory between heaven and hell; this indeed is a love which appertains to the category of reasoned affections no more; its place is with the visions of saints, the intuitions of philosophers, in Plato's ideal world. It is recognised as a secret which none can hope to fathom till we can discern from some mount of unearthly vision what those eternal things were indeed to which somewhat in human nature blindly perceived itself akin.

The parallel between Rossetti and Dante must not be pushed too far. Rossetti is but as a Dante still in the *selva oscura*; he has not sounded hell so profoundly, nor mounted into heaven so high. He is not a prophet but an artist; yet an artist who, both by the very intensity of his artistic vision, and by some inborn bent towards symbol and mysticism, stands on the side of those who see in material things a spiritual significance, and utters words of universal meaning from the fulness of his own heart. Yet he is, it must be repeated, neither prophet, philosopher, nor saint. The basis of his love is the normal emotion—"the delight in beauty alloyed with appetite, and strengthened by the alloy"—and although that love has indeed learnt, in George Eliot's words, to "acknowledge an effect from the imagined light of unproven

firmaments, and have its scale set to the grander orbit of what hath been and shall be," this transfiguration is effected not so much by any elevation of ethical feeling, as by the mere might and potency of an ardent spirit which projects itself with passionate intensity among things unreachable and unknown. To him his beloved one seems not as herself alone, "but as the meaning of all things that are;" her voice recalls a prenatal memory, and her eyes "dream against a distant goal." We hear little of the intellectual aspects of passion, of the subtle interaction of one character on another, of the modes in which Love possesses himself of the eager or the reluctant heart. In these poems the lovers have lost their idiosyncrasies; they are made at one for ever; the two streams have mingled only to become conscious that they are being drawn together into a boundless sea. Nay, the very passion which serves to unite them, and which is sometimes dwelt on with an Italian emphasis of sensuousness which our English reserve condemns, tends oftener to merge itself in the mystic companionship which holds the two souls together in their enchanted land.

One flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player  
 Even where my lady and I lay all alone;  
 Saying: "Behold, this minstrel is unknown;  
 Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here;  
 Only my strains are to Love's dear ones dear."  
 Then said I: "Through thine hautboy's rapturous tone  
 Unto my lady still this harp makes moan,  
 And still she deems the cadence deep and clear."  
 Then said my lady: "Thou art Passion of Love,  
 And this Love's Worship; both he plights to me.  
 Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea;  
 But where wan water trembles in the grove,  
 And the wan moon is all the light thereof,  
 This harp still makes my name its Voluntary."

The voluntaries of the white-winged harp-player do not linger long among the accidents of earth; they link with the beloved name all "the soul's sphere of infinite images," all that she finds of benign or wondrous "amid the bitterness of things occult." And as the lover moves amid these mysteries it appears to him that Love is the key which may unlock them all. For the need is not so much of an intellectual insight as of an elevation of the whole being—a rarefaction, as it were, of man's spirit which Love's pure fire effects, and which enables it to penetrate more deeply into the ideal world.

In that thin air Love undergoes a yet further transformation. The personal element, already sublimed into a mystic companionship, retires into the background. The lover is now, in Plato's words, ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ πέλαιος τετραμμένος τοῦ καλοῦ; he has set sail upon the ocean of Beauty, and Love becomes the ἑρμηνεῖον καὶ διαπορθμεῖον, the "interpreter and mediator between God and man," through whom the true prayer passes and the true revelation is made.

Not I myself know all my love for thee :  
 How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh  
 To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday ?  
 Shall birth and death, and all dark names that be  
 As doors and windows bared to some loud sea,  
 Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray ;  
 And shall my sense pierce love—the last relay  
 And ultimate outpost of eternity ?

For thus, indeed, is Love discerned to be something which lies beyond the region of this world's wisdom or desire—something out of proportion to earthly needs and to causes that we know. Here is the point where the lover's personality seems to be exalted to its highest, and at the same moment to disappear ; as he perceives that his individual emotion is merged in the flood and tideway of a cosmic law :—

Lo ! what am I to Love, the lord of all ?  
 One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand—  
 One little heart-flame sheltered in his hand.  
 Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call  
 And veriest touch of powers primordial  
 That any hour-girt life may understand.

Alas ! this call, by its very nature, is heard in one heart alone ; this "touch of powers primordial" is intransferable to other souls. The eyes which, to the lover's vision,

The sun-gate of the soul unbar,  
 Being of its furthest fires oracular,

can send this message to the world only through sign and symbol ; the "bower of unimagined flower and tree" is fashioned by Love in such hearts only as he has already made his own.

And thus it is that so much of Rossetti's art, in speech or colour, spends itself in the effort to communicate the incommunicable. It is toward "the vale of magical dark mysteries" that those grave low-hanging brows are bent, and "vanished hours and hours eventual" brood in the remorseful gaze of Pandora, the yearning gaze of Proserpine. The pictures that perplex us with their obvious incompleteness, their new and haunting beauty, are not the mere caprices of a richly-dowered but wandering spirit. Rather they may be called (and none the less so for their shortcomings) the sacred pictures of a new religion ; forms and faces which bear the same relation to that mystical worship of Beauty on which we have dwelt so long, as the forms and faces of a Francia or a Leonardo bear to the mediæval mysteries of the worship of Mary or of Christ. And here it is that in Rossetti's pictures we find ourselves in the midst of a novel symbolism—a symbolism genuine and deeply felt as that of the fifteenth century, and using once more birds and flowers and stars, colours and lights of the evening or the dawn, to tell of beauties impalpable, spaces unfathomed, the setting and resurrection of no measurable or earthly day.

It is chiefly in a series of women's faces that these ideas seek expres-

sion. All these have something in common, some union of strange and puissant physical loveliness with depth and remoteness of gaze. They range from demon to angel—as such names may be interpreted in a Religion of Beauty—from Lilith, whose beauty is destruction, and Astarte, throned between the Sun and Moon in her sinister splendour, to the *Blessed Damozel* and the 'maiden pre-elect,' type of the love whose look regenerates and whose assumption lifts to heaven. But all have the look—characteristic of Rossetti's faces as the mystic smile of Leonardo's—the look which bids the spectator murmur—

What netherworld gulf-whispers doth she hear,  
In answering echoes from what planisphere,  
Along the wind, along the estuary?

And since these primal impulses, at any rate, will remain to mankind, since Love's pathway will be re-trodden by many a generation, and all of faith or knowledge to which that pathway leads will endure, it is no small part of the poet's function to show in how great a measure Love does actually presuppose and consist of this exaltation of the mystic element in man; and how the sense of unearthly destinies may give dignity to Love's invasion, and steadfastness to his continuance, and surround his vanishing with the mingled ecstasy of anguish and of hope. Let us trace, with Rossetti, some stages of his onward way.

The inexplicable suddenness with which Love will sometimes possess himself of two several hearts—finding a secret kinship which, like a common aroma, permeates the whole being of each—has often suggested the thought that such companionship is not in reality now first begun; that it is founded in a pre-natal affection, and is the unconscious prolongation of the emotions of an ideal world—

Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,  
That among souls allied to mine was yet  
One nearer kindred than life hinted of.  
O born with me somewhere that men forget,  
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,  
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough!

It is thus that Rossetti traces backward the kindling of the earthly flame. And he feels also that if love be so pervading, so fateful a thing, the man who takes it upon him has much to fear. He moves among great risks; "the moon-track of the journeying face of Fate" is subject for him to strange perturbations, to terrible eclipse. What if his love be a mistake?—if he feels against his will a disenchantment stealing over the enchanted garden, and his new self walking, a ghastly intruder among scenes vainly consecrated by an illusive past?

Whence came his feet into my field, and why?  
How is it that he finds it all so drear?  
How do I see his seeing, and how hear  
The name his bitter silence knows it by?

Or what of him for whom some unforgotten hour has marred his

life's best felicity, *et inquinavit ære tempus aureum*? What of the recollection that chills his freest moments with an inward and icy breath?

Look in my face, my name is Might-have-been;  
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell.

There is no need to invite attention to the lines which thus begin. They will summon their own auditors; they will not die till that inward Presence dies also, and there sits not at the heart of any man a memory deeper than his joy.

But over all lovers, however wisely they may love, and well, there hangs one shadow which no wisdom can avert. To one or other the shock must come, the separation which will make the survivor's after-life seem something posthumous, and its events like the changes in a dream.

Upon Rossetti, as is well known, that shock fell with desolating force. There seems a kind of indelicacy in analysing the poems which reflect the stages of that sorrow. But those who know the utmost anguish of yearning have found in the sonnets entitled "Willow-wood" a voice speaking as from their own hearts. The state of tension which finds utterance in these sonnets is by its very nature transitory. There comes a time when most men forget. But in some hearts the change which comes over the passion of love is not decay, but transfiguration. That passion is generalised, as Plato desired that it should be generalised, though in a somewhat different way. The Platonic enthusiasm of admiration was to extend itself "from one fair form to all fair forms," and from fair forms to noble and beautiful ideas and actions, and all that is likest God. And something not unlike this takes place when the lover feels that the object of his earthly worship, now removed from his sight, is becoming identified for him with all else that he has been wont to revere—representative to him, to use Plato's words again, "of those things, by dwelling on which it is that even a god is divine." It is not, indeed, the bereaved lover only who finds in a female figure the ideal recipient of his impulses of adoring love. Of how many creeds has this been the inspiring element!—from the painter who invokes upon his canvas a Virgin revealed in sleep, to the philosopher who preaches the worship of Humanity in a woman's likeness, to be at once the Mother and the Beloved of all. Yet this ideal will operate most actively in hearts which can give to that celestial vision a remembered reality, whose "memorial threshold" seems visibly to bridge the passage between the transitory and the supernal world.

City, of thine a single, simple door,  
By some new Power reduplicate, must be  
Even yet my life-porch in eternity,  
Even with one presence filled, as once of yore;  
Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strown floor  
Thee and thy years and these my words and me.

And if sometimes this transmuted passion—this religion of beauty spiritualised into a beatific dream—should prompt to quietism rather than to vigorous action; if sometimes we hear in the mourner's utterance a tone as of a man too weak for his destiny—this has its pathos too. For it is a part of the lot of man that the fires which purify should also consume him, and that as the lower things become distasteful the energy which seeks the higher things should fade too often into a sad repose.

Here with her face doth Memory sit,  
 Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,  
 Till other eyes shall look from it—  
 Eyes of the spirit's Palestine,  
 Even than the old gaze tenderer;  
 While hopes and aims, long lost with her,  
 Stand round her image side by side,  
 Like tombs of pilgrims that have died  
 About the Holy Sepulchre.

And when the dream and the legend which inspired Rossetti's boyhood with the vision of the *Blessed Damsel*—which kindled his early manhood into the sweetest *Ave* that ever saluted "Mary Virgin, full of grace"—had transformed themselves in his heart into the reality and the recollection; when Love had been made known to him by life itself and death—then the vaguer worship became a concentrated expectancy: one vanished hand seemed to offer the endless welcome, one name to symbolise all heaven, and to be in itself the single hope.

Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air  
 Between the scripted petals softly blown  
 Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,—  
 Ah! let none other alien spell so'er,  
 But only the one Hope's one name be there,—  
 Not less nor more, but e'en that word alone.

Enough, perhaps, has been said to show not only how superficial is the view which represents Rossetti as a dangerous sensualist, but also how inadequately we shall understand him if we think to find in him only the commonplaces of passion dressed out in fantastic language and Italianised allegory. There is more to be learnt from him than this, though it be too soon, as yet, to discern with exactness his place in the history of our time. Yet we may note that his sensitive and reserved individuality; his life, absorbed in Art, and aloof from—without being below—the circles of politics or fashion; his refinement, created as it were from within, and independent of conventional models, point him out as a member of that new aristocracy of which we have already spoken, that *optimacy* of passion and genius (if we may revive an obsolete word to express a new shade of meaning) which is coming into existence as a cosmopolitan gentility among the confused and fading class-distinctions of the past. And, further, we may observe in him the reaction of Art against Materialism, which becomes more marked as the



dominant tone of science grows more soulless and severe. The instincts which make other men Catholics, Ritualists, Hegelians, have compelled him, too, to seek "the meaning of all things that are" elsewhere than in the behaviour of ether and atoms, though he can track his revelation to no source more explicit than the look in a woman's eyes.

But if we ask—and it was one of the questions with which we started—what encouragement the moralist can find in this counter-wave of art and mysticism which meets the materialistic tide, there is no certain or easy answer. The one view of life seems as powerless as the other to supply that antique and manly virtue which civilisation tends to undermine by the lessening effort that it exacts of men, the increasing enjoyment which it offers to them. "Time has run back and fetched the age of gold," in the sense that the opulent can now take life as easily as it was taken in Paradise; and Rossetti's poems, placed beside Sidney's or Lovelace's, seem the expression of a century which is refining itself into quietism and mellowing into decay.

Yet thus much we may safely affirm, that if we contrast æstheticism with pure hedonism—the pursuit of pleasure through art with the pursuit of pleasure simply as pleasure—the one has a tendency to quicken and exalt, as the other to deaden and vulgarise, the emotions and appetencies of man. If only the artist can keep clear of the sensual selfishness which will, in its turn, degrade the art which yields to it; if only he can worship beauty with a strong and single heart, his emotional nature will acquire a grace and elevation which are not, indeed, identical with the elevation of virtue, the grace of holiness, but which are none the less a priceless enrichment of the complex life of man. Rossetti could never have summoned us to the clear heights of Wordsworth's *Laodamia*. Yet who can read the *House of Life* and not feel that the poet has known love as love can be—not an enjoyment only, or a triumph, but a worship and a regeneration; love not fleeting, nor changeful, but "far above all passionate winds of welcome and farewell;" love offering to the soul no mere excitation and by-play, but "a heavenly solstice, hushed and halcyon;" love whose "hours elect in choral consonancy" bear with them nothing that is vain or vulgar, common or unclear. He must have felt as no passing tragedy the long ache of parted pain, "the ground-whirl of the perished leaves of hope," "the sunset's desolate disarray," the fruitless striving "to wrest a bond from night's inveteracy," to behold "for once, for once alone," the unforgotten eyes re-risen from the dark of death.

Love, as Plato said, is the *ἐρμηνεύων καὶ διαπορθμεύων*, "the interpreter and mediator" between things human and things divine; and it may be to love that we must look to teach the worshipper of beauty that the highest things are also the loveliest, and that the strongest of moral agencies is also the most pervading and keenest joy. Art and religion, which no compression could amalgamate, may by love be expanded and interfused; and thus the poet may not err so wholly who seeks in a



woman's eyes "the meaning of all things that are ;" and "the soul's sphere of infinite images" may not be a mere prismatic fringe to reality, but rather those images may be as dark rays made visible by passing through the medium of a mind which is fitted to refract and reflect them.

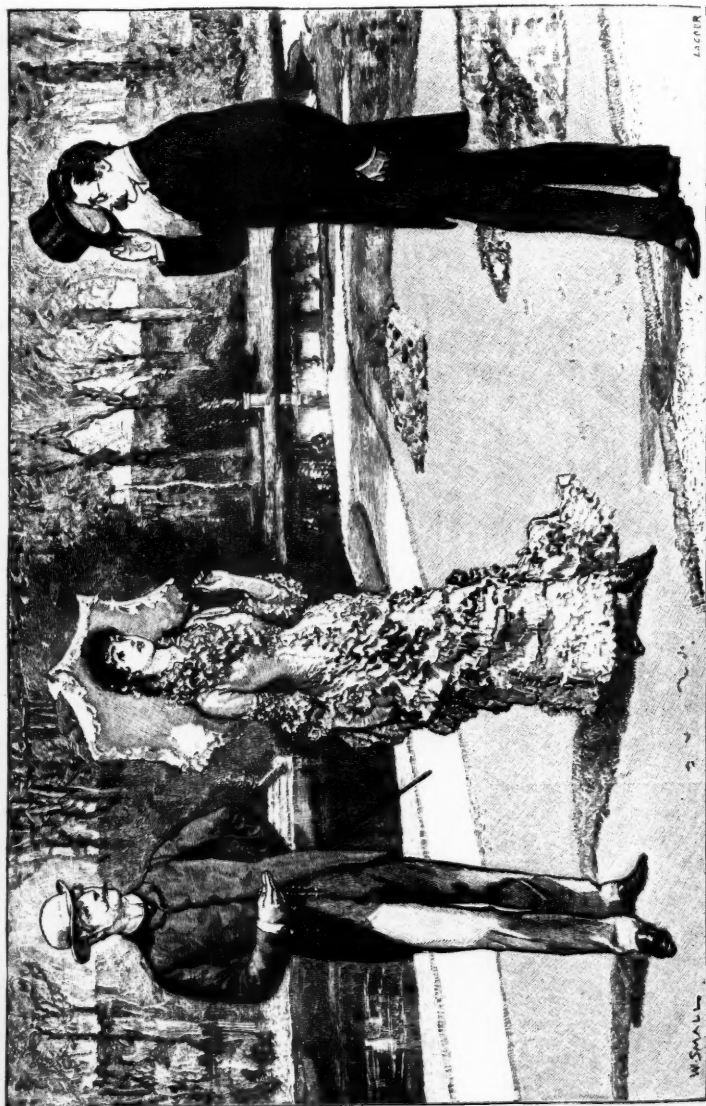
A faint, a fitful reflex! Whether it be from light of sun or of moon, *sole reppercursum aut radiantis imagine lunæ*—the glimmer of a vivifying or of a phantom day—may scarcely be for us to know. But never yet has the universe been proved smaller than the conceptions of man, whose furthest, deepest speculation has only found *within* him yet profounder abysses—*without*, a more unfathomable heaven.

F. W. H. MYERS.

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"COME TO GET ME OUT AS USUAL!"

## The Siege of London.\*

IN TWO PARTS.

### PART II.

#### VI.



THE Easter holidays that year were unusually genial; mild, watery sunshine assisted the progress of the spring. The high, dense hedges, in Warwickshire, were like walls of hawthorn embedded in banks of primrose, and the finest trees in England, springing out of them with a regularity which suggested conservative principles, began to cover themselves with a kind of green downiness. Rupert Waterville, devoted to his duties and faithful in attendance at the Legation, had had little time

to enjoy that rural hospitality which is the great invention of the English people and the most perfect expression of their character. He had been invited now and then—for in London he commended himself to many people as a very sensible young man—but he had been obliged to decline more proposals than he accepted. It was still, therefore, rather a novelty to him to stay at one of those fine old houses, surrounded with hereditary acres, which from the first of his coming to England he had thought of with such curiosity and such envy. He proposed to himself to see as many of them as possible, but he disliked to do things in a hurry, or when his mind was preoccupied, as it was so apt to be, with what he believed to be business of importance. He kept the country-houses in reserve; he would take them up in their order, after he should have got a little more used to London. Without hesitation,

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however, he had accepted the invitation to Longlands; it had come to him in a simple and familiar note, from Lady Demesne, with whom he had no acquaintance. He knew of her return from Cannes, where she had spent the whole winter, for he had seen it related in a Sunday newspaper; yet it was with a certain surprise that he heard from her in these informal terms. "Dear Mr. Waterville," she wrote, "my son tells me that you will perhaps be able to come down here on the 17th, to spend two or three days. If you can, it will give us much pleasure. We can promise you the society of your charming countrywoman, Mrs. Headway."

He had seen Mrs. Headway; she had written to him a fortnight before from an hotel in Cork Street, to say that she had arrived in London for the season and should be very glad to see him. He had gone to see her, trembling with the fear that she would break ground about her presentation; but he was agreeably surprised to observe that she neglected this topic. She had spent the winter in Rome, travelling directly from that city to England, with just a little stop in Paris to buy a few clothes. She had taken much satisfaction in Rome, where she made many friends; she assured him that she knew half the Roman nobility. "They are charming people; they have only one fault, they stay too long," she said. And, in answer to his inquiring glance, "I mean when they come to see you," she explained. "They used to come every evening, and they wanted to stay till the next day. They were all princes and counts. I used to give them cigars, &c. I knew as many people as I wanted," she added, in a moment, discovering perhaps in Waterville's eye the traces of that sympathy with which six months before he had listened to her account of her discomfiture in New York. "There were lots of English; I knew all the English, and I mean to visit them here. The Americans waited to see what the English would do, so as to do the opposite. Thanks to that, I was spared some precious specimens. There are, you know, some fearful ones. Besides, in Rome, society doesn't matter, if you have a feeling for the ruins and the Campagna; I had an immense feeling for the Campagna. I was always mooning round in some damp old temple. It reminded me a good deal of the country round San Diego—if it hadn't been for the temples. I liked to think it all over, when I was driving round; I was always brooding over the past." At this moment, however, Mrs. Headway had dismissed the past; she was prepared to give herself up wholly to the actual. She wished Waterville to advise her as to how she should live—what she should do. Should she stay at a hotel, or should she take a house? She guessed she had better take a house, if she could find a nice one. Max wanted to look for one, and she didn't know but she'd let him; he got her such a nice one in Rome. She said nothing about Sir Arthur Demesne, who, it seemed to Waterville, would have been her natural guide and sponsor; he wondered whether her relations with the baronet had come to an end. Waterville had met him a couple of times since the opening of Parliament, and they had

exchanged twenty words, none of which, however, had reference to Mrs. Headway. Waterville had been recalled to London just after the incident of which he was witness in the court of the Hôtel Meurice; and all he knew of its consequences was what he had learned from Littlemore, who, on his way back to America, where he had suddenly ascertained that there were reasons for his spending the winter, passed through the British capital. Littlemore had reported that Mrs. Headway was enchanted with Lady Demesne, and had no words to speak of her kindness and sweetness. "She told me she liked to know her son's friends, and I told her I liked to know my friends' mothers," Mrs. Headway had related. "I should be willing to be old if I could be like that," she had added, oblivious for the moment that she was at least as near to the age of the mother as to that of the son. The mother and son, at any rate, had retired to Cannes together, and at this moment Littlemore had received letters from home which caused him to start for Arizona. Mrs. Headway had accordingly been left to her own devices, and he was afraid she had bored herself, though Mrs. Bagshaw had called upon her. In November she had travelled to Italy, not by way of Cannes.

"What do you suppose she'll do in Rome?" Waterville had asked; his imagination failing him here, for he had not yet trodden the Seven Hills.

"I haven't the least idea. And I don't care!" Littlemore added in a moment. Before he left London he mentioned to Waterville that Mrs. Headway, on his going to take leave of her in Paris, had made another, and a rather unexpected, attack. "About the society business—she said I must really do something—she couldn't go on in that way. And she appealed to me in the name—I don't think I quite know how to say it."

"I should be very glad if you would try," said Waterville, who was constantly reminding himself that Americans in Europe were, after all, in a manner, to a man in his position, as the sheep to the shepherd.

"Well, in the name of the affection that we had formerly entertained for each other."

"The affection?"

"So she was good enough to call it. But I deny it all. If one had to have an affection for every woman one used to sit up 'evenings' with——!" And Littlemore paused, not defining the result of such an obligation. Waterville tried to imagine what it would be; while his friend embarked for New York, without telling him how, after all, he had resisted Mrs. Headway's attack.

At Christmas, Waterville knew of Sir Arthur's return to England, and believed that he also knew that the baronet had not gone down to Rome. He had a theory that Lady Demesne was a very clever woman—clever enough to make her son do what she preferred and yet also make him think it his own choice. She had been politic, accommodating, about

going to see Mrs. Headway ; but, having seen her and judged her, she had determined to break the thing off. She had been sweet and kind, as Mrs. Headway said, because for the moment that was easiest ; but she had made her last visit on the same occasion as her first. She had been sweet and kind, but she had set her face as a stone, and if poor Mrs. Headway, arriving in London for the season, expected to find any vague promises redeemed, she would taste of the bitterness of shattered hopes. He had made up his mind that, shepherd as he was, and Mrs. Headway one of his sheep, it was none of his present duty to run about after her, especially as she could be trusted not to stray too far. He saw her a second time, and she still said nothing about Sir Arthur. Waterville, who always had a theory, said to himself that she was waiting, that the baronet had not turned up. She was also getting into a house ; the courier had found her in Chesterfield Street, Mayfair, a little gem, which was to cost her what jewels cost. After all this, Waterville was greatly surprised at Lady Demesne's note, and he went down to Longlands with much the same impatience with which, in Paris, he would have gone, if he had been able, to the first night of a new comedy. It seemed to him that, through a sudden stroke of good fortune, he had received a *billet d'auteur*.

It was agreeable to him to arrive at an English country-house at the close of the day. He liked the drive from the station in the twilight, the sight of the fields and copses and cottages, vague and lonely in contrast to his definite, lighted goal ; the sound of the wheels on the long avenue, which turned and wound repeatedly without bringing him to what he reached however at last—the wide, grey front, with a glow in its scattered windows and a sweep of still firmer gravel up to the door. The front at Longlands, which was of this sober complexion, had a grand, pompous air ; it was attributed to the genius of Sir Christopher Wren. There were wings which came forward in a semicircle, with statues placed at intervals on the cornice ; so that in the flattering dusk it looked like an Italian palace, erected through some magical evocation in an English park. Waterville had taken a late train, which left him but twenty minutes to dress for dinner. He prided himself considerably on the art of dressing both quickly and well ; but this operation left him no time to inquire whether the apartment to which he had been assigned befitted the dignity of a Secretary of Legation. On emerging from his room he found there was an ambassador in the house, and this discovery was a check to uneasy reflections. He tacitly assumed that he would have had a better room if it had not been for the ambassador, who was of course counted first. The large, brilliant house gave an impression of the last century and of foreign taste, of light colours, high, vaulted ceilings, with pale mythological frescoes, gilded doors, surmounted by old French panels, faded tapestries and delicate damasks, stores of ancient china, among which great jars of pink roses were conspicuous. The people in the house had assembled for dinner in the



principal hall, which was animated by a fire of great logs, and the company was so numerous that Waterville was afraid he was the last. Lady Demesne gave him a smile and a touch of her hand; she was very tranquil, and, saying nothing in particular, treated him as if he had been a constant visitor. Waterville was not sure whether he liked this or hated it; but these alternatives mattered equally little to his hostess, who looked at her guests as if to see whether the number were right. The master of the house was talking to a lady before the fire; when he caught sight of Waterville across the room, he waved him "how d'ye do," with an air of being delighted to see him. He had never had that air in Paris, and Waterville had a chance to observe, what he had often heard, to how much greater advantage the English appear in their country-houses. Lady Demesne turned to him again, with her sweet vague smile, which looked as if it were the same for everything.

"We are waiting for Mrs. Headway," she said.

"Ah, she has arrived?" Waterville had quite forgotten her.

"She came at half-past five. At six she went to dress. She has had two hours."

"Let us hope that the results will be proportionate," said Waterville, smiling.

"Oh, the results; I don't know," Lady Demesne murmured, without looking at him; and in these simple words Waterville saw the confirmation of his theory that she was playing a deep game. He wondered whether he should sit next to Mrs. Headway at dinner, and hoped, with due deference to this lady's charms, that he should have something more novel. The results of a toilet which she had protracted through two hours were presently visible. She appeared on the staircase which descended to the hall, and which, for three minutes, as she came down rather slowly, facing the people beneath, placed her in considerable relief. Waterville, as he looked at her, felt that this was a moment of importance for her: it was virtually her entrance into English society. Mrs. Headway entered English society very well, with her charming smile upon her lips and with the trophies of the Rue de la Paix trailing behind her. She made a portentous rustling as she moved. People turned their eyes toward her; there was soon a perceptible diminution of talk, though talk had not been particularly audible. She looked very much alone, and it was rather pretentious of her to come down last, though it was possible that this was simply because, before her glass, she had been unable to please herself. For she evidently felt the importance of the occasion, and Waterville was sure that her heart was beating. She was very valiant, however; she smiled more intensely, and advanced like a woman who was used to being looked at. She had at any rate the support of knowing that she was pretty; for nothing on this occasion was wanting to her prettiness, and the determination to succeed, which might have made her hard, was veiled in the virtuous consciousness that she had neglected nothing. Lady Demesne went forward to meet her;

Sir Arthur took no notice of her ; and presently Waterville found himself proceeding to dinner with the wife of an ecclesiastic, to whom Lady Demesne had presented him for this purpose when the hall was almost empty. The rank of this ecclesiastic in the hierarchy he learned early on the morrow ; but in the meantime it seemed to him strange, somehow, that in England ecclesiastics should have wives. English life, even at the end of a year, was full of those surprises. The lady, however, was very easily accounted for ; she was in no sense a violent exception, and there had been no need of the Reformation to produce her. Her name was Mrs. April ; she was wrapped in a large lace shawl ; to eat her dinner she removed but one glove, and the other gave Waterville at moments an odd impression that the whole repast, in spite of its great completeness, was something of the picnic order. Mrs. Headway was opposite, at a little distance ; she had been taken in, as Waterville learned from his neighbour, by a general, a gentleman with a lean, aquiline face and a cultivated whisker, and she had on the other side a smart young man of an identity less definite. Poor Sir Arthur sat between two ladies much older than himself, whose names, redolent of history, Waterville had often heard, and had associated with figures more romantic. Mrs. Headway gave Waterville no greeting ; she evidently had not seen him till they were seated at table, when she simply stared at him with a violence of surprise that for a moment almost effaced her smile. It was a copious and well-ordered banquet, but as Waterville looked up and down the table he wondered whether some of its elements might not be a little dull. As he made this reflection he became conscious that he was judging the affair much more from Mrs. Headway's point of view than from his own. He knew no one but Mrs. April, who, displaying an almost motherly desire to give him information, told him the names of many of their companions ; in return for which he explained to her that he was not in that set. Mrs. Headway got on in perfection with her general ; Waterville watched her more than he appeared to do, and saw that the general, who evidently was a cool hand, was drawing her out. Waterville hoped she would be careful. He was a man of fancy, in his way, and as he compared her with the rest of the company he said to himself that she was a very plucky little woman, and that her present undertaking had a touch of the heroic. She was alone against many, and her opponents were a very serried phalanx ; those who were there represented a thousand others. They looked so different from her that to the eye of the imagination she stood very much on her merits. All those people seemed so completely made up, so unconscious of effort, so surrounded with things to rest upon ; the men with their clean complexions, their well-hung chins, their cold, pleasant eyes, their shoulders set back, their absence of gesture ; the women, several very handsome, half strangled in strings of pearls, with smooth plain tresses, seeming to look at nothing in particular, supporting silence as if it were as becoming as candlelight, yet talking a little, sometimes, in fresh, rich voices. They were all

wrapped in a community of ideas, of traditions; they understood each other's accent, even each other's variations. Mrs. Headway, with all her prettiness, seemed to transcend these variations; she looked foreign, exaggerated; she had too much expression; she might have been engaged for the evening. Waterville remarked, moreover, that English society was always looking out for amusement and that its transactions were conducted on a cash basis. If Mrs. Headway were amusing enough she would probably succeed, and her fortune—if fortune there was—would not be a hindrance.

In the drawing-room, after dinner, he went up to her, but she gave him no greeting. She only looked at him with an expression he had never seen before—a strange, bold expression of displeasure.

"Why have you come down here?" she asked. "Have you come to watch me?"

Waterville coloured to the roots of his hair. He knew it was terribly little like a diplomatist; but he was unable to control his blushes. Besides, he was shocked, he was angry, and in addition he was mystified. "I came because I was asked," he said.

"Who asked you?"

"The same person that asked you, I suppose—Lady Demesne."

"She's an old cat!" Mrs. Headway exclaimed, turning away from him.

He turned away from her as well. He didn't know what he had done to deserve such treatment. It was a complete surprise; he had never seen her like that before. She was a very vulgar woman; that was the way people talked, he supposed, at San Diego. He threw himself almost passionately into the conversation of the others, who all seemed to him, possibly a little by contrast, extraordinarily genial and friendly. He had not, however, the consolation of seeing Mrs. Headway punished for her rudeness, for she was not in the least neglected. On the contrary, in the part of the room where she sat the group was denser, and every now and then it was agitated with unanimous laughter. If she should amuse them, he said to himself, she would succeed; and evidently she was amusing them.

## VII.

If she was strange, he had not come to the end of her strangeness. The next day was a Sunday and uncommonly fine; he was down before breakfast, and took a walk in the park, stopping to gaze at the thin-legged deer, scattered like pins on a velvet cushion over some of the remoter slopes, and wandering along the edge of a large sheet of ornamental water, which had a temple, in imitation of that of Vesta, on an island in the middle. He thought at this time no more about Mrs. Headway; he only reflected that these stately objects had for more than a hundred years furnished a background to a great deal of family history. A little more reflection would perhaps have suggested to him that Mrs. Headway was possibly an incident of some importance in the history of

a family. Two or three ladies failed to appear at breakfast; Mrs. Headway was one of them.

"She tells me she never leaves her room till noon," he heard Lady Demesne say to the general, her companion of the previous evening, who had asked about her. "She takes three hours to dress."

"She's a monstrous clever woman!" the general exclaimed.

"To do it in three hours?"

"No; I mean the way she keeps her wits about her."

"Yes; I think she's very clever," said Lady Demesne, in a tone in which Waterville flattered himself that he saw more meaning than the general could see. There was something in this tall, straight, deliberate woman, who seemed at once benevolent and distant, that Waterville admired. With her delicate surface, her conventional mildness, he could see that she was very strong; she had set her patience upon a height, and she carried it like a diadem. She had very little to say to Waterville, but every now and then she made some inquiry of him that showed she had not forgotten him. Demesne himself was apparently in excellent spirits, though there was nothing bustling in his deportment, and he only went about looking very fresh and fair, as if he took a bath every hour or two, and very secure against the unexpected. Waterville had less conversation with him than with his mother; but the young man had found occasion to say to him the night before, in the smoking-room, that he was delighted Waterville had been able to come, and that if he was fond of real English scenery there were several things about there he should like very much to show him.

"You must give me an hour or two before you go, you know; I really think there are some things you'll like."

Sir Arthur spoke as if Waterville would be very fastidious; he seemed to wish to attach a vague importance to him. On the Sunday morning after breakfast he asked Waterville if he should care to go to church; most of the ladies and several of the men were going.

"It's just as you please, you know; but it's rather a pretty walk across the fields, and a curious little church of King Stephen's time."

Waterville knew what this meant; it was already a picture. Besides, he liked going to church, especially when he sat in the Squire's pew, which was sometimes as big as a boudoir. So he replied that he should be delighted. Then he added, without explaining his reason—

"Is Mrs. Headway going?"

"I really don't know," said his host, with an abrupt change of tone—as if Waterville had asked him whether the housekeeper were going.

"The English are awfully queer!" Waterville indulged mentally in this exclamation, to which since his arrival in England he had had recourse whenever he encountered a gap in the consistency of things. The church was even a better picture than Sir Arthur's description of it, and Waterville said to himself that Mrs. Headway had been a great fool not to come. He knew what she was after; she wished to study English

life, so that she might take possession of it; and to pass in among a hedge of bobbing rustics, and sit among the monuments of the old Demesnes, would have told her a great deal about English life. If she wished to fortify herself for the struggle she had better come to that old church. When he returned to Longlands—he had walked back across the meadows with the canon's wife, who was a vigorous pedestrian—it wanted half an hour of luncheon, and he was unwilling to go indoors. He remembered that he had not yet seen the gardens, and he wandered away in search of them. They were on a scale which enabled him to find them without difficulty, and they looked as if they had been kept up unremittingly for a century or two. He had not advanced very far between their blooming borders when he heard a voice that he recognised, and a moment after, at the turn of an alley, he came upon Mrs. Headway, who was attended by the master of Longlands. She was bareheaded beneath her parasol, which she flung back, stopping short, as she beheld her compatriot.

"Oh, it's Mr. Waterville come to spy me out as usual!" It was with this remark that she greeted the slightly embarrassed young man.

"Hallo! you've come home from church," Sir Arthur said, pulling out his watch.

Waterville was struck with his coolness. He admired it; for, after all, he said to himself, it must have been disagreeable to him to be interrupted. He felt a little like a fool, and wished he had kept Mrs. April with him, to give him the air of having come for her sake.

Mrs. Headway looked adorably fresh, in a toilet which Waterville, who had his ideas on such matters, was sure would not be regarded as the proper thing for a Sunday morning in an English country house: a *négligé* of white flounces and frills, interspersed with yellow ribbons—a garment which Madame de Pompadour might have worn when she received a visit from Louis XV., but would probably not have worn when she went into the world. The sight of this costume gave the finishing touch to Waterville's impression that Mrs. Headway knew, on the whole, what she was about. She would take a line of her own; she would not be too accommodating. She would not come down to breakfast; she would not go to church; she would wear on Sunday mornings little elaborately informal dresses, and look dreadfully un-British and un-Protestant. Perhaps, after all, this was better. She began to talk with a certain volubility.

"Isn't this too lovely? I walked all the way from the house. I'm not much at walking, but the grass in this place is like a parlour. The whole thing is beyond everything. Sir Arthur, you ought to go and look after the ambassador; it's shameful the way I've kept you. You didn't care about the ambassador? You said just now you had scarcely spoken to him, and you must make it up. I never saw such a way of neglecting your guests. Is that the usual style over here? Go and take him out for a ride, or make him play a game of billiards. Mr. Waterville will take me home; besides, I want to scold him for spying on me."

Waterville sharply resented this accusation. "I had no idea you were here," he declared.

"We weren't hiding," said Sir Arthur quietly. "Perhaps you'll see Mrs. Headway back to the house. I think I ought to look after old Davidoff. I believe lunch is at two."

He left them, and Waterville wandered through the gardens with Mrs. Headway. She immediately wished to know if he had come there to look after her; but this inquiry was accompanied, to his surprise, with the acrimony she had displayed the night before. He was determined not to let that pass, however; when people had treated him in that way they should not be allowed to forget it.

"Do you suppose I am always thinking of you?" he asked. "You're out of my mind sometimes. I came here to look at the gardens, and if you hadn't spoken to me I should have passed on."

Mrs. Headway was perfectly good-natured; she appeared not even to hear his defence. "He has got two other places," she simply rejoined. "That's just what I wanted to know."

But Waterville would not be turned away from his grievance. That mode of reparation to a person whom you had insulted which consisted in forgetting that you had done so, was doubtless largely in use in New Mexico; but a person of honour demanded something more. "What did you mean last night by accusing me of having come down here to watch you? You must excuse me if I tell you that I think you were rather rude." The sting of this accusation lay in the fact that there was a certain amount of truth in it; yet for a moment Mrs. Headway, looking very blank, failed to recognise the allusion. "She's a barbarian, after all," thought Waterville. "She thinks a woman may slap a man's face and run away!"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Headway, suddenly, "I remember; I was angry with you; I didn't expect to see you. But I didn't really care about it, at all. Every now and then I am angry, like that, and I work it off on any one that's handy. But it's over in three minutes, and I never think of it again. I was angry last night; I was furious with the old woman."

"With the old woman?"

"With Sir Arthur's mother. She has no business here, any way. In this country, when the husband dies, they're expected to clear out. She has a house of her own, ten miles from here, and she has another in Portman Square; so she's got plenty of places to live. But she sticks—she sticks to him like a plaster. All of a sudden it came over me that she didn't invite me here because she liked me, but because she suspects me. She's afraid we'll make a match, and she thinks I ain't good enough for her son. She must think I'm in a great hurry to get hold of him. I never went after him; he came after me. I should never have thought of anything if it hadn't been for him. He began it last summer at Homburg; he wanted to know why I didn't come to England; he told



me I should have great success. He doesn't know much about it, any way; he hasn't got much gumption. But he's a very nice man, all the same; it's very pleasant to see him surrounded by his ——" And Mrs. Headway paused a moment, looking admiringly about her—"surrounded by all his old heirlooms. I like the old place," she went on; "it's beautifully mounted; I'm quite satisfied with what I've seen. I thought Lady Demesne was very friendly; she left a card on me in London, and, very soon after, she wrote to me to ask me here. But I'm very quick; I sometimes see things in a flash. I saw something yesterday, when she came to speak to me at dinner-time. She saw I looked pretty, and it made her blue with rage; she hoped I would be ugly. I should like very much to oblige her; but what can one do? Then I saw that she had asked me here only because he insisted. He didn't come to see me when I first arrived—he never came near me for ten days. She managed to prevent him; she got him to make some promise. But he changed his mind after a little, and then he had to do something really polite. He called three days in succession, and he made her come. She's one of those women that resists as long as she can, and then seems to give in, while she's really resisting more than ever. She hates me like poison; I don't know what she thinks I've done. She's very underhand; she's a regular old cat. When I saw you last night at dinner, I thought she had got you here to help her."

"To help her?" Waterville asked.

"To tell her about me. To give her information, that she can make use of against me. You may tell her what you like!"

Waterville was almost breathless with the attention he had given to this extraordinary burst of confidence, and now he really felt faint. He stopped short; Mrs. Headway went on a few steps, and then, stopping too, turned and looked at him. "You're the most unspeakable woman!" he exclaimed. She seemed to him indeed a barbarian.

She laughed at him—he felt she was laughing at his expression of face—and her laugh rang through the stately gardens. "What sort of a woman is that?"

"You've got no delicacy," said Waterville resolutely.

She coloured quickly, though, strange to say, she appeared not to be angry. "No delicacy?" she repeated.

"You ought to keep those things to yourself."

"Oh, I know what you mean; I talk about everything. When I'm excited I've got to talk. But I must do things in my own way. I've got plenty of delicacy, when people are nice to me. Ask Arthur Demesne if I ain't delicate—ask George Littlemore if I ain't. Don't stand there all day; come in to lunch!" And Mrs. Headway resumed her walk, while Rupert Waterville, raising his eyes for a moment, slowly overtook her. "Wait till I get settled; then I'll be delicate," she pursued. "You can't be delicate when you're trying to save your life. It's very well for you to talk, with the whole American Legation to back



you. Of course I'm excited. I've got hold of this thing, and I don't mean to let go!" Before they reached the house she told him why he had been invited to Longlands at the same time as herself. Waterville would have liked to believe that his personal attractions sufficiently explained the fact; but she took no account of this supposition. Mrs. Headway preferred to think that she lived in an element of ingenious machination, and that most things that happened had reference to herself. Waterville had been asked because he represented, however modestly, the American Legation, and their host had a friendly desire to make it appear that this pretty American visitor, of whom no one knew anything, was under the protection of that establishment. "It would start me better," said Mrs. Headway serenely. "You can't help yourself—you've helped to start me. If he had known the Minister he would have asked him—or the first secretary. But he don't know them."

They reached the house by the time Mrs. Headway had developed this idea, which gave Waterville a pretext more than sufficient for detaining her in the portico. "Do you mean to say Sir Arthur told you this?" he inquired, almost sternly.

"Told me? Of course not! Do you suppose I would let him take the tone with me that I need any favours? I should like to hear him tell me that I'm in want of assistance!"

"I don't see why he shouldn't—at the pace you go yourself. You say it to every one."

"To every one? I say it to you, and to George Littlemore—when I'm nervous. I say it to you because I like you, and to him because I'm afraid of him. I'm not in the least afraid of you, by the way. I'm all alone—I haven't got any one. I must have some comfort, mustn't I? Sir Arthur scolded me for putting you off last night—he noticed it; and that was what made me guess his idea."

"I'm much obliged to him," said Waterville, rather bewildered.

"So mind you answer for me. Don't you want to give me your arm, to go in?"

"You're a most extraordinary combination," he murmured, as she stood smiling at him.

"Oh, come, don't *you* fall in love with me!" she cried, with a laugh; and, without taking his arm, passed in before him.

That evening, before he went to dress for dinner, Waterville wandered into the library, where he felt sure that he should find some superior bindings. There was no one in the room, and he spent a happy half-hour among the treasures of literature and the triumphs of old morocco. He had a great esteem for good literature; he held that it should have handsome covers. The daylight had begun to wane, but whenever, in the rich-looking dimness, he made out the glimmer of a well-gilded back, he took down the volume and carried it to one of the deep-set windows. He had just finished the inspection of a delightfully fragrant folio, and was about to carry it back to its niche, when he

found himself standing face to face with Lady Demesne. He was startled for a moment; for her tall, slim figure, her fair visage, which looked white in the high, brown room, and the air of serious intention with which she presented herself, gave something spectral to her presence. He saw her smile, however, and heard her say, in that tone of hers which was sweet almost to sadness, "Are you looking at our books? I'm afraid they are rather dull."

"Dull? Why, they are as bright as the day they were bound." And he turned the glittering panels of his folio towards her.

"I'm afraid I haven't looked at them for a long time," she murmured, going nearer to the window, where she stood looking out. Beyond the clear pane the park stretched away, with the greyness of evening beginning to hang itself on the great limbs of the oaks. The place appeared cold and empty, and the trees had an air of conscious importance, as if Nature herself had been bribed somehow to take the side of county families. Lady Demesne was not an easy person to talk with; she was neither spontaneous nor abundant; she was conscious of herself, conscious of many things. Her very simplicity was conventional, though it was rather a noble convention. You might have pitied her, if you had seen that she lived in constant unrelaxed communion with certain rigid ideals. This made her at times seem tired, like a person who has undertaken too much. She gave an impression of still brightness, which was not at all brilliancy, but a carefully preserved purity. She said nothing for a moment, and there was an appearance of design in her silence, as if she wished to let him know that she had a certain business with him, without taking the trouble to announce it. She had been accustomed to expect that people would suppose things, and to be saved the trouble of explanations. Waterville made some haphazard remark about the beauty of the evening (in point of fact, the weather had changed for the worse), to which she vouchsafed no reply. Then, presently, she said, with her usual gentleness, "I hoped I should find you here—I wish to ask you something."

"Anything I can tell you—I shall be delighted!" Waterville exclaimed.

She gave him a look, not imperious, almost appealing, which seemed to say—"Please be very simple—very simple indeed." Then she glanced about her, as if there had been other people in the room; she didn't wish to appear closeted with him, or to have come on purpose. There she was, at any rate, and she went on. "When my son told me he should ask you to come down, I was very glad. I mean, of course, that we were delighted ——" And she paused a moment. Then she added, simply, "I want to ask you about Mrs. Headway."

"Ah, here it is!" cried Waterville within himself. More superficially, he smiled, as agreeably as possible, and said, "Ah, yes, I see!"

"Do you mind my asking you? I hope you don't mind. I haven't any one else to ask."

"Your son knows her much better than I do." Waterville said this without an intention of malice, simply to escape from the difficulties of his situation; but after he had said it, he was almost frightened by its mocking sound.

"I don't think he knows her. She knows him, which is very different. When I ask him about her, he merely tells me she is fascinating. She *is* fascinating," said her ladyship, with inimitable dryness.

"So I think, myself. I like her very much," Waterville rejoined cheerfully.

"You are in all the better position to speak of her, then."

"To speak well of her?" said Waterville, smiling.

"Of course, if you can. I should be delighted to hear you do that. That's what I wish—to hear some good of her."

It might have seemed, after this, that nothing would have remained but for Waterville to launch himself into a panegyric of his mysterious countrywoman; but he was no more to be tempted into that danger than into another. "I can only say I like her," he repeated. "She has been very kind to me."

"Every one seems to like her," said Lady Demesne, with an unstudied effect of pathos. "She is certainly very amusing."

"She is very good-natured; she has lots of good intentions."

"What do you call good intentions?" asked Lady Demesne, very sweetly.

"Well; I mean that she wants to be friendly and pleasant."

"Of course you have to defend her. She's your countrywoman."

"To defend her—I must wait till she's attacked," said Waterville, laughing.

"That's very true. I needn't call your attention to the fact that I am not attacking her. I should never attack a person staying in this house. I only want to know something about her, and if you can't tell me, perhaps at least you can mention some one who will."

"She'll tell you herself. Tell you by the hour!"

"What she has told my son? I shouldn't understand it. My son doesn't understand it. It's very strange. I rather hoped you might explain it."

Waterville was silent a moment. "I'm afraid I can't explain Mrs. Headway," he remarked at last.

"I see you admit she is very peculiar."

Waterville hesitated again. "It's too great a responsibility to answer you." He felt that he was very disobliging; he knew exactly what Lady Demesne wished him to say. He was unprepared to blight the reputation of Mrs. Headway to accommodate Lady Demesne; and yet, with his active little imagination, he could enter perfectly into the feelings of this tender, formal, serious woman, who—it was easy to see—had looked for her own happiness in the cultivation of duty and in extreme constancy to two or three objects of devotion chosen once for all. She must, indeed, have had a vision of things which would represent Mrs.

Headway as both displeasing and dangerous. But he presently became aware that she had taken his last words as a concession in which she might find help.

"You know why I ask you these things, then?"

"I think I have an idea," said Waterville, persisting in irrelevant laughter. His laugh sounded foolish in his own ears.

"If you know that, I think you ought to assist me." Her tone changed as she spoke these words; there was a quick tremor in it; he could see it was a confession of distress. Her distress was deep; he immediately felt that it must have been, before she made up her mind to speak to him. He was sorry for her, and determined to be very serious.

"If I could help you I would. But my position is very difficult."

"It's not so difficult as mine!" She was going all lengths; she was really appealing to him. "I don't imagine that you are under any obligation to Mrs. Headway—you seem to me very different," she added.

Waterville was not insensible to any discrimination that told in his favour; but these words gave him a slight shock, as if they had been an attempt at bribery. "I am surprised that you don't like her," he ventured to observe.

Lady Demesne looked out of the window a little. "I don't think you are really surprised, though possibly you try to be. I don't like her, at any rate, and I can't fancy why my son should. She's very pretty, and she appears to be very clever; but I don't trust her. I don't know what has taken possession of him; it is not usual in his family to marry people like that. I don't think she's a lady. The person I should wish for him would be so very different—perhaps you can see what I mean. There's something in her history that we don't understand. My son understands it no better than I. If you could only explain to us, that might be a help. I treat you with great confidence the first time I see you; it's because I don't know where to turn. I am exceedingly anxious."

It was very plain that she was anxious; her manner had become more vehement; her eyes seemed to shine in the thickening dusk. "Are you very sure there is danger?" Waterville asked. "Has he asked her to marry him, and has she consented?"

"If I wait till they settle it all, it will be too late. I have reason to believe that my son is not engaged, but he is terribly entangled. At the same time he is very uneasy, and that may save him yet. He has a great sense of honour. He is not satisfied about her past life; he doesn't know what to think of what we have been told. Even what she admits is so strange. She has been married four or five times—she has been divorced again and again—it seems so extraordinary. She tells him that in America it is different, and I daresay you have not our ideas; but really there is a limit to everything. There must have been some great irregularities—I am afraid some great scandals. It's dreadful to have to accept such things. He has not told me all this but it's not necessary he should tell me; I know him well enough to guess."

"Does he know that you have spoken to me?" Waterville asked.

"Not in the least. But I must tell you that I shall repeat to him anything that you may say against her."

"I had better say nothing, then. It's very delicate. Mrs. Headway is quite undefended. One may like her or not, of course. I have seen nothing of her that is not perfectly correct."

"And you have heard nothing?"

Waterville remembered Littlemore's assertion that there were cases in which a man was bound in honour to tell an untruth, and he wondered whether this were such a case. Lady Demesne imposed herself, she made him believe in the reality of her grievance, and he saw the gulf that divided her from a pushing little woman who had lived with Western editors. She was right to wish not to be connected with Mrs. Headway. After all, there had been nothing in his relations with that lady to make it incumbent on him to lie for her. He had not sought her acquaintance, she had sought his; she had sent for him to come and see her. And yet he couldn't give her away, as they said in New York; that stuck in his throat. "I am afraid I really can't say anything. And it wouldn't matter. Your son won't give her up because I happen not to like her."

"If he were to believe she has done wrong, he would give her up."

"Well; I have no right to say so," said Waterville.

Lady Demesne turned away; she was much disappointed in him. He was afraid she was going to break out—"Why, then, do you suppose I asked you here?" She quitted her place near the window and was apparently about to leave the room. But she stopped short. "You know something against her, but you won't say it."

Waterville hugged his folio and looked awkward. "You attribute things to me. I shall never say anything."

"Of course you are perfectly free. There is some one else who knows, I think—another American—a gentleman who was in Paris when my son was there. I have forgotten his name."

"A friend of Mrs. Headway's? I suppose you mean George Littlemore."

"Yes—Mr. Littlemore. He has a sister, whom I have met; I didn't know she was his sister till to-day. Mrs. Headway spoke of her, but I find she doesn't know her. That itself is a proof, I think. Do you think *he* would help me?" Lady Demesne asked, very simply.

"I doubt it; but you can try."

"I wish he had come with you. Do you think he would come?"

"He is in America at this moment; but I believe he soon comes back."

"I shall go to his sister; I will ask her to bring him to see me. She is extremely nice; I think she will understand. Unfortunately there is very little time."

"Don't count too much on Littlemore," said Waterville gravely.

"You men have no pity."

"Why should we pity you? How can Mrs. Headway hurt such a person as you?"

Lady Demesne hesitated a moment. "It hurts me to hear her voice."

"Her voice is very sweet."

"Possibly. But she's horrible!"

This was too much, it seemed to Waterville; poor Mrs. Headway was extremely open to criticism, and he himself had declared she was a barbarian. Yet she was not horrible. "It's for your son to pity you. If he doesn't, how can you expect it of others?"

"Oh, but he does!" And with a majesty that was more striking even than her logic, Lady Demesne moved towards the door.

Waterville advanced to open it for her, and as she passed out he said, "There's one thing you can do—try to like her!"

She shot him a terrible glance. "That would be worst of all!"

#### VIII.

George Littlemore arrived in London on the twentieth of May, and one of the first things he did was to go and see Waterville at the Legation, where he made known to him that he had taken for the rest of the season a house at Queen Anne's Gate, so that his sister and her husband, who, under the pressure of diminished rents, had let their own town-residence, might come up and spend a couple of months with him.

"One of the consequences of your having a house will be that you will have to entertain Mrs. Headway," Waterville said.

Littlemore sat there with his hands crossed upon his stick; he looked at Waterville with an eye that failed to kindle at the mention of this lady's name. "Has she got into European society?" he asked, rather languidly.

"Very much, I should say. She has a house, and a carriage, and diamonds, and everything handsome. She seems already to know a lot of people; they put her name in the *Morning Post*. She has come up very quickly; she's almost famous. Every one is asking about her—you'll be plied with questions."

Littlemore listened gravely. "How did she get in?"

"She met a large party at Longlands, and made them all think her great fun. They must have taken her up; she only wanted a start."

Littlemore seemed suddenly to be struck with the grotesqueness of this news, to which his first response was a burst of quick laughter. "To think of Nancy Beck! The people here are queer people. There's no one they won't go after. They wouldn't touch her in New York."

"Oh, New York's old-fashioned," said Waterville; and he announced to his friend that Lady Demesne was very eager for his arrival, and wanted to make him help her to prevent her son's bringing such a person into the family. Littlemore apparently was not alarmed at her lady,



ship's projects, and intimated, in the manner of a man who thought them rather impertinent, that he could trust himself to keep out of her way. "It isn't a proper marriage, at any rate," Waterville declared.

"Why not, if he loves her?"

"Oh, if that's all you want!" cried Waterville, with a degree of cynicism that rather surprised his companion. "Would you marry her yourself?"

"Certainly, if I were in love with her."

"You took care not to be that."

"Yes, I did—and so Demesne had better have done. But since he's bitten——!" and Littlemore terminated his sentence in a suppressed yawn.

Waterville presently asked him how he would manage, in view of his sister's advent, about asking Mrs. Headway to his house; and he replied that he would manage by simply not asking her. Upon this, Waterville declared that he was very inconsistent; to which Littlemore rejoined that it was very possible. But he asked whether they couldn't talk about something else than Mrs. Headway. He couldn't enter into the young man's interest in her, and was sure to have enough of her later.

Waterville would have been sorry to give a false idea of his interest in Mrs. Headway; for he flattered himself the feeling had definite limits. He had been two or three times to see her; but it was a relief to think that she was now quite independent of him. There had been no revival of that intimate intercourse which occurred during the visit to Longlands. She could dispense with assistance now; she knew herself that she was in the current of success. She pretended to be surprised at her good fortune, especially at its rapidity; but she was really surprised at nothing. She took things as they came, and, being essentially a woman of action, wasted almost as little time in elation as she would have done in despondence. She talked a great deal about Lord Edward and Lady Margaret, and about such other members of the nobility as had shown a desire to cultivate her acquaintance; professing to understand perfectly the sources of a popularity which apparently was destined to increase. "They come to laugh at me," she said; "they come simply to get things to repeat. I can't open my mouth but they burst into fits. It's a settled thing that I'm an American humourist; if I say the simplest things, they begin to roar. I must express myself somehow; and indeed when I hold my tongue they think me funnier than ever. They repeat what I say to a great person, and a great person told some of them the other night that he wanted to hear me for himself. I'll do for him what I do for the others; no better and no worse. I don't know how I do it; I talk the only way I can. They tell me it isn't so much the things I say as the way I say them. Well, they're very easy to please. They don't care for me; it's only to be able to repeat Mrs. Headway's 'last.' Every one wants to have it first; it's a regular race." When she found what



was expected of her she undertook to supply the article in abundance; and the poor little woman really worked hard at her Americanisms. If the taste of London lay that way, she would do her best to gratify it; it was only a pity she hadn't known it before; she would have made more extensive preparations. She thought it a disadvantage, of old, to live in Arizona, in Dakotah, in the newly-admitted States; but now she perceived that, as she phrased it to herself, this was the best thing that ever had happened to her. She tried to remember all the queer stories she had heard out there, and keenly regretted that she had not taken them down in writing; she drummed up the echoes of the Rocky Mountains and practised the intonations of the Pacific slope. When she saw her audience in convulsions, she said to herself that this was success, and believed that, if she had only come to London five years sooner, she might have married a duke. That would have been even a more absorbing spectacle for the London world than the actual proceedings of Sir Arthur Demesne, who, however, lived sufficiently in the eye of society to justify the rumour that there were bets about town as to the issue of his already protracted courtship. It was food for curiosity to see a young man of his pattern—one of the few "earnest" young men of the Tory side, with an income sufficient for tastes more marked than those by which he was known—make up to a lady several years older than himself, whose fund of Californian slang was even larger than her stock of dollars. Mrs. Headway had got a good many new ideas since her arrival in London, but she also retained several old ones. The chief of these—it was now a year old—was that Sir Arthur Demesne was the most irreproachable young man in the world. There were, of course, a good many things that he was not. He was not amusing; he was not insinuating; he was not of an absolutely irrepressible ardour. She believed he was constant; but he was certainly not eager. With these things, however, Mrs. Headway could perfectly dispense; she had, in particular, quite outlived the need of being amused. She had had a very exciting life, and her vision of happiness at present was to be magnificently bored. The idea of complete and uncriticised respectability filled her soul with satisfaction; her imagination prostrated itself in the presence of this virtue. She was aware that she had achieved it but ill in her own person; but she could now, at least, connect herself with it by sacred ties. She could prove in that way what was her deepest feeling. This was a religious appreciation of Sir Arthur's great quality—his smooth and rounded, his blooming, lily-like exemption from social flaws.

She was at home when Littlemore went to see her, and surrounded by several visitors, to whom she was giving a late cup of tea and to whom she introduced her compatriot. He stayed till they dispersed, in spite of the manœuvres of a gentleman who evidently desired to outstay him, but who, whatever might have been his happy fortune on former visits, received on this occasion no encouragement from Mrs. Headway. He looked at Littlemore slowly, beginning with his boots and travelling

upwards, as if to discover the reason of so unexpected a preference, and then, without a salutation, left him face to face with their hostess.

"I'm curious to see what you'll do for me, now that you've got your sister with you," Mrs. Headway presently remarked, having heard of this circumstance from Rupert Waterville. "I suppose you'll have to do something, you know. I'm sorry for you; but I don't see how you can get off. You might ask me to dine some day when she's dining out. I would come even then, I think, because I want to keep on the right side of you."

"I call that the wrong side," said Littlemore.

"Yes, I see. It's your sister that's on the right side. You're in rather an embarrassing position, ain't you? However, you take those things very quietly. There's something in you that exasperates me. What does your sister think of me? Does she hate me?"

"She knows nothing about you."

"Have you told her nothing?"

"Never a word."

"Hasn't she asked you? That shows that she hates me. She thinks I ain't creditable to America. I know all that. She wants to show people over here that, however they may be taken in by me, she knows much better. But she'll have to ask you about me; she can't go on for ever. Then what'll you say?"

"That you're the most successful woman in Europe."

"Oh, bother!" cried Mrs. Headway, with irritation.

"Haven't you got into European society?"

"Maybe I have, maybe I haven't. It's too soon to see. I can't tell this season. Every one says I've got to wait till next, to see if it's the same. Sometimes they take you up for a few weeks, and then never know you again. You've got to fasten the thing somehow—to drive in a nail."

"You speak as if it were your coffin," said Littlemore.

"Well; it is a kind of coffin. I'm burying my past!"

Littlemore winced at this. He was tired to death of her past. He changed the subject, and made her talk about London, a topic which she treated with a great deal of humour. She entertained him for half-an-hour, at the expense of most of her new acquaintances and of some of the most venerable features of the great city. He himself looked at England from the outside, as much as it was possible to do; but in the midst of her familiar allusions to people and things known to her only since yesterday, he was struck with the fact that she would never really be initiated. She buzzed over the surface of things like a fly on a window-pane. She liked it immensely; she was flattered, encouraged, excited; she dropped her confident judgments as if she were scattering flowers, and talked about her intentions, her prospects, her wishes. But she knew no more about English life than about the molecular theory. The words in which he had described her of old to Waterville came back

to him : "*Elle ne se doute de rien !*" Suddenly she jumped up ; she was going out to dine, and it was time to dress. "Before you leave I want you to promise me something," she said offhand, but with a look which he had seen before and which meant that the point was important. "You'll be sure to be questioned about me." And then she paused.

"How do people know I know you ?"

"You haven't bragged about it ? Is that what you mean ? You can be a brute when you try. They do know it, at any rate. Possibly I may have told them. They'll come to you, to ask about me. I mean from Lady Demesne. She's in an awful state—she's so afraid her son'll marry me."

Littlemore was unable to control a laugh. "I'm not, if he hasn't done it yet."

"He can't make up his mind. He likes me so much, yet he thinks I'm not a woman to marry." It was positively grotesque, the detachment with which she spoke of herself.

"He must be a poor creature if he won't marry you as you are," Littlemore said.

This was not a very gallant form of speech ; but Mrs. Headway let it pass. She only replied, "Well ; he wants to be very careful, and so he ought to be !"

"If he asks too many questions, he's not worth marrying."

"I beg your pardon—he's worth marrying whatever he does—he's worth marrying for me. And I want to marry him—that's what I want to do."

"Is he waiting for me, to settle it ?"

"He's waiting for I don't know what—for some one to come and tell him that I'm the sweetest of the sweet. Then he'll believe it. Some one who has been out there and knows all about me. Of course you're the man ; you're created on purpose. Don't you remember how I told you in Paris that he wanted to ask you ? He was ashamed, and he gave it up ; he tried to forget me. But now it's all on again ; only, meanwhile, his mother has been at him. She works at him night and day, like a weasel in a hole, to persuade him that I'm far beneath him. He's very fond of her, and he's very open to influence—I mean from his mother, not from any one else. Except me, of course. Oh, I've influenced him ; I've explained everything fifty times over. But some things are rather complicated, don't you know ; and he keeps coming back to them. He wants every little speck explained. He won't come to you himself, but his mother will, or she'll send some of her people. I guess she'll send the lawyer—the family solicitor, they call him. She wanted to send him out to America to make inquiries, only she didn't know where to send. Of course I couldn't be expected to give the places ; they've got to find them out for themselves. She knows all about you, and she has made the acquaintance of your sister. So you see how much

I know. She's waiting for you; she means to catch you. She has an idea she can fix you—make you say what'll meet her views. Then she'll lay it before Sir Arthur. So you'll be so good as to deny everything."

Littlemore listened to this little address attentively, but the conclusion left him staring. "You don't mean that anything I can say will make a difference?"

"Don't be affected! You know it will as well as I."

"You make him out a precious idiot."

"Never mind what I make him out. I want to marry him, that's all. And I appeal to you solemnly. You can save me, as you can lose me. If you lose me, you'll be a coward. And if you say a word against me, I shall be lost."

"Go and dress for dinner, that's your salvation," Littlemore answered, separating from her at the head of the stairs.

#### IX.

It was very well for him to take that tone; but he felt as he walked home that he should scarcely know what to say to people who were determined, as Mrs. Headway put it, to catch him. She had worked a certain spell; she had succeeded in making him feel responsible. The sight of her success, however, rather hardened his heart; he was irritated by her ascending movement. He dined alone that evening, while his sister and her husband, who had engagements every day for a month, partook of their repast at the expense of some friends. Mrs. Dolphin, however, came home rather early, and immediately sought admittance to the small apartment at the foot of the staircase, which was already spoken of as Littlemore's den. Reginald had gone to a "squash" somewhere, and she had returned without delay, having something particular to say to her brother. She was too impatient even to wait till the next morning. She looked impatient; she was very unlike George Littlemore. "I want you to tell me about Mrs. Headway," she said, while he started slightly at the coincidence of this remark with his own thoughts. He was just making up his mind at last to speak to her. She unfastened her cloak and tossed it over a chair; then pulled off her long tight black gloves, which were not so fine as those Mrs. Headway wore; all this as if she were preparing herself for an important interview. She was a small, neat woman, who had once been pretty, with a small, thin voice, a sweet, quiet manner, and a perfect knowledge of what it was proper to do on every occasion in life. She always did it, and her conception of it was so definite that failure would have left her without excuse. She was usually not taken for an American; but she made a point of being one, because she flattered herself that she was of a type which, in that nationality, borrowed distinction from its rarity. She was by nature a great Conservative, and had ended by being a better

Tory than her husband. She was thought by some of her old friends to have changed immensely since her marriage. She knew as much about English society as if she had invented it; had a way, usually, of looking as if she were dressed for a ride; had also thin lips and pretty teeth and was as positive as she was amiable. She told her brother that Mrs. Headway had given out that he was her most intimate friend, and she thought it rather odd he had never spoken of her. He admitted that he had known her a long time, referred to the circumstances in which the acquaintance had sprung up, and added that he had seen her that afternoon. He sat there smoking his cigar and looking at the ceiling, while Mrs. Dolphin delivered herself of a series of questions. Was it true that he liked her so much, was it true he thought her a possible woman to marry, was it not true that her antecedents had been most peculiar?

"I may as well tell you that I have a letter from Lady Demesne," Mrs. Dolphin said. "It came to me just before I went out, and I have it in my pocket."

She drew forth the missive, which she evidently wished to read to him; but he gave her no invitation to do so. He knew that she had come to him to extract a declaration adverse to Mrs. Headway's projects, and, however little satisfaction he might take in this lady's upward flight, he hated to be urged and pushed. He had a great esteem for Mrs. Dolphin, who, among other Hampshire notions, had picked up that of the preponderance of the male members of a family, so that she treated him with a consideration which made his having an English sister rather a luxury. Nevertheless he was not very encouraging about Mrs. Headway. He admitted once for all that she had not behaved properly—it wasn't worth while to split hairs about that—but he couldn't see that she was much worse than many other women, and he couldn't get up much feeling about her marrying or not marrying. Moreover, it was none of his business, and he intimated that it was none of Mrs. Dolphin's.

"One surely can't resist the claims of common humanity!" his sister replied; and she added that he was very inconsistent. He didn't respect Mrs. Headway, he knew the most dreadful things about her, he didn't think her fit company for his own flesh and blood. And yet he was willing to let poor Arthur Demesne be taken in by her!

"Perfectly willing!" Littlemore exclaimed. "All I've got to do is not to marry her myself."

"Don't you think we have any responsibilities, any duties?"

"I don't know what you mean. If she can succeed, she's welcome. It's a splendid sight in its way."

"How do you mean splendid?"

"Why, she has run up the tree as if she were a squirrel!"

"It's very true that she has an audacity *à toute épreuve*. But English society has become scandalously easy. I never saw anything

like the people that are taken up. Mrs. Headway has had only to appear to succeed. If they think there's something bad about you they'll be sure to run after you. It's like the decadence of the Roman Empire. You can see to look at Mrs. Headway that she's not a lady. She's pretty, very pretty, but she looks like a dissipated dressmaker. She failed absolutely in New York. I have seen her three times—she apparently goes everywhere. I didn't speak of her—I was wanting to see what you would do. I saw that you meant to do nothing, then this letter decided me. It's written on purpose to be shown to you; it's what she wants you to do. She wrote to me before I came to town, and I went to see her as soon as I arrived. I think it very important. I told her that if she would draw up a little statement I would put it before you as soon as we got settled. She's in real distress. I think you ought to feel for her. You ought to communicate the facts exactly as they stand. A woman has no right to do such things and come and ask to be accepted. She may make it up with her conscience, but she can't make it up with society. Last night at Lady Dovedale's I was afraid she would know who I was and come and speak to me. I was so frightened that I went away. If Sir Arthur wishes to marry her for what she is, of course he's welcome. But at least he ought to know."

Mrs. Dolphin was not excited nor voluble; she moved from point to point with a calmness which had all the air of being used to have reason on its side. She deeply desired, however, that Mrs. Headway's triumphant career should be checked; she had sufficiently abused the facilities of things. Herself a party to an international marriage, Mrs. Dolphin naturally wished that the class to which she belonged should close its ranks and carry its standard high.

"It seems to me that she's quite as good as the little baronet," said Littlemore, lighting another cigar.

"As good? What do you mean? No one has ever breathed a word against him."

"Very likely. But he's a nonentity, and she at least is somebody. She's a person, and a very clever one. Besides, she's quite as good as the women that lots of them have married. I never heard that the British gentry were so unspotted."

"I know nothing about other cases," Mrs. Dolphin said; "I only know about this one. It so happens that I have been brought near to it, and that an appeal has been made to me. The English are very romantic—the most romantic people in the world, if that's what you mean. They do the strangest things, from the force of passion—even those from whom you would least expect it. They marry their cooks—they marry their coachmen—and their romances always have the most miserable end. I'm sure this one would be most wretched. How can you pretend that such a woman as that is to be trusted? What I see is a fine old race—one of the oldest and most honourable in England, people with every tradition of good conduct and high principle—and a



dreadful, disreputable, vulgar little woman, who hasn't an idea of what such things are, trying to force her way into it. I hate to see such things—I want to go to the rescue!"

"I don't—I don't care anything about the fine old race."

"Not from interested motives, of course, any more than I. But surely, on artistic grounds, on grounds of decency?"

"Mrs. Headway isn't indecent—you go too far. You must remember that she's an old friend of mine." Littlemore had become rather stern; Mrs. Dolphin was forgetting the consideration due, from an English point of view, to brothers.

She forgot it even a little more. "Oh, if you are in love with her, too!" she murmured, turning away.

He made no answer to this, and the words had no sting for him. But at last, to finish the affair, he asked what in the world the old lady wanted him to do. Did she want him to go out into Piccadilly and announce to the passers-by that there was one winter when even Mrs. Headway's sister didn't know who was her husband?

Mrs. Dolphin answered this inquiry by reading out Lady Demesne's letter, which her brother, as she folded it up again, pronounced one of the most extraordinary letters he had ever heard.

"It's very sad—it's a cry of distress," said Mrs. Dolphin. "The whole meaning of it is that she wishes you would come and see her. She doesn't say so in so many words, but I can read between the lines. Besides, she told me she would give anything to see you. Let me assure you it's your duty to go."

"To go and abuse Nancy Beck?"

"Go and praise her, if you like!" This was very clever of Mrs. Dolphin, but her brother was not so easily caught. He didn't take that view of his duty, and he declined to cross her ladyship's threshold. "Then she'll come and see you," said Mrs. Dolphin, with decision.

"If she does, I'll tell her Nancy's an angel."

"If you can say so conscientiously, she'll be delighted to hear it," Mrs. Dolphin replied, as she gathered up her cloak and gloves.

Meeting Rupert Waterville the next day, as he often did, at the St. George's Club, which offers a much-appreciated hospitality to secretaries of legation and to the natives of the countries they assisted in representing, Littlemore let him know that his prophecy had been fulfilled and that Lady Demesne had been making proposals for an interview. "My sister read me a most remarkable letter from her," he said.

"What sort of a letter?"

"The letter of a woman so scared that she will do anything. I may be a great brute, but her fright amuses me."

"You're in the position of Olivier de Jalin, in the *Demi-Monde*," Waterville remarked.

"In the *Demi-Monde*?" Littlemore was not quick at catching literary allusions.



"Don't you remember the play we saw in Paris? Or like Don Fabrice in *L'Aventurière*. A bad woman tries to marry an honourable man, who doesn't know how bad she is, and they who do know step in and push her back."

"Yes, I remember. There was a good deal of lying, all round."

"They prevented the marriage, however, which is the great thing."

"The great thing, if you care about it. One of them was the intimate friend of the fellow, the other was his son. Demesne's nothing to me."

"He's a very good fellow," said Waterville.

"Go and tell him, then."

"Play the part of Olivier de Jalin? Oh, I can't; I'm not Olivier. But I wish he would come along. Mrs. Headway oughtn't really to be allowed to pass."

"I wish to heaven they'd let me alone," Littlemore murmured ruefully, staring for a while out of the window.

"Do you still hold to that theory you propounded in Paris? Are you willing to commit perjury?" Waterville asked.

"Of course I can refuse to answer questions—even that one."

"As I told you before, that will amount to a condemnation."

"It may amount to what it pleases. I think I will go to Paris."

"That will be the same as not answering. But it's quite the best thing you can do. I have been thinking a great deal about it, and it seems to me, from the social point of view, that, as I say, she really oughtn't to pass." Waterville had the air of looking at the thing from a great elevation; his tone, the expression of his face, indicated this lofty flight; the effect of which, as he glanced down at his didactic young friend, Littlemore found peculiarly irritating.

"No; after all, hanged if they shall drive me away!" he exclaimed abruptly; and walked off, while his companion looked after him.

## X.

The morning after this Littlemore received a note from Mrs. Headway—a short and simple note, consisting merely of the words, "I shall be at home this afternoon; will you come and see me at five? I have something particular to say to you." He sent no answer to this inquiry, but he went to the little house in Chesterfield Street at the hour that it's mistress had designated.

"I don't believe you know what sort of woman I am!" she exclaimed, as soon as he stood before her.

"Oh, Lord!" Littlemore groaned, dropping into a chair. Then he added, "Don't begin on that sort of thing!"

"I shall begin—that's what I wanted to say. It's very important. You don't know me—you don't understand me. You think you do—but you don't."

"It isn't for the want of your having told me—many, many times!" And Littlemore smiled, though he was bored at the prospect that opened before him. The last word of all was, decidedly, that Mrs. Headway was a nuisance. She didn't deserve to be spared!

She glared at him a little, at this; her face was no longer the face that smiled. She looked sharp and violent, almost old; the change was complete. But she gave a little angry laugh. "Yes, I know; men are so stupid. They know nothing about women but what women tell them. And women tell them things on purpose, to see how stupid they can be. I've told you things like that, just for amusement, when it was dull. If you believed them, it was your own fault. But now I am serious; I want you really to know."

"I don't want to know. I know enough."

"How do you mean, you know enough?" she cried, with a flushed face. "What business have you to know anything?" The poor little woman, in her passionate purpose, was not obliged to be consistent, and the loud laugh with which Littlemore greeted this interrogation must have seemed to her unduly harsh. "You shall know what I want you to know, however. You think me a bad woman—you don't respect me; I told you that in Paris. I have done things I don't understand, my self, to-day; that I admit, as fully as you please. But I've completely changed, and I want to change everything. You ought to enter into that; you ought to see what I want. I hate everything that has happened to me before this; I loathe it, I despise it. I went on that way trying—one thing and another. But now I've got what I want. Do you expect me to go down on my knees to you? I believe I will, I'm so anxious. You can help me—no one else can do a thing—no one can do anything—they are only waiting to see if he'll do it. I told you in Paris you could help me, and it's just as true now. Say a good word for me, for God's sake! You haven't lifted your little finger, or I should know it by this time. It will just make the difference. Or if your sister would come and see me, I should be all right. Women are pitiless, pitiless, and you are pitiless too. It isn't that she's anything so great, most of my friends are better than that!—but she's the one woman who *knows*, and people know that she knows. *He* knows that she knows, and he knows she doesn't come. So she kills me—she kills me! I understand perfectly what he wants—I shall do everything, be anything, I shall be the most perfect wife. The old woman will adore me when she knows me—it's too stupid of her not to see. Everything in the past is over; it has all fallen away from me; it's the life of another woman. This was what I wanted; I knew I should find it some day. What could I do in those horrible places? I had to take what I could. But now I've got a nice country. I want you to do me justice; you have never done me justice; that's what I sent for you for."

Littlemore suddenly ceased to be bored; but a variety of feelings had taken the place of a single one. It was impossible not to be touched;

she really meant what she said. People don't change their nature; but they change their desires, their ideal, their effort. This incoherent and passionate protestation was an assurance that she was literally panting to be respectable. But the poor woman, whatever she did, was condemned, as Littlemore had said of old, in Paris, to Waterville, to be only half-right. The colour rose to her visitor's face as he listened to this outpouring of anxiety and egotism; she had not managed her early life very well, but there was no need of her going down on her knees. "It's very painful to me to hear all this," he said. "You are under no obligation to say such things to me. You entirely misconceive my attitude—my influence."

"Oh, yes, you shirk it—you only wish to shirk it!" she cried, flinging away fiercely the sofa-cushion on which she had been resting.

"Marry whom you please!" Littlemore almost shouted, springing to his feet.

He had hardly spoken when the door was thrown open, and the servant announced Sir Arthur Demesne. The baronet entered with a certain briskness, but he stopped short on seeing that Mrs. Headway had another visitor. Recognising Littlemore, however, he gave a slight exclamation, which might have passed for a greeting. Mrs. Headway, who had risen as he came in, looked with extraordinary earnestness from one of the men to the other; then, like a person who had a sudden inspiration, she clasped her hands together and cried out, "I'm so glad you've met; if I had arranged it, it couldn't be better!"

"If you had arranged it?" said Sir Arthur, crinkling a little his high, white forehead, while the conviction rose before Littlemore that she had indeed arranged it.

"I'm going to do something very strange," she went on, and her eye glittered with a light that confirmed her words.

"You're excited; I'm afraid you're ill." Sir Arthur stood there with his hat and his stick; he was evidently much annoyed.

"It's an excellent opportunity; you must forgive me if I take advantage." And she flashed a tender, touching ray at the baronet. "I have wanted this a long time—perhaps you have seen I wanted it. Mr. Littlemore has known me a long, long time; he's an old, old friend. I told you that in Paris, don't you remember? Well, he's my only one, and I want him to speak for me." Her eyes had turned now to Littlemore; they rested upon him with a sweetness that only made the whole proceeding more audacious. She had begun to smile again, though she was visibly trembling. "He's my only one," she continued; "it's a great pity, you ought to have known others. But I'm very much alone, I must make the best of what I have. I want so much that some one else than myself should speak for me. Women usually can ask that service of a relative, or of another woman. I can't; it's a great pity, but it's not my fault, it's my misfortune. None of my people are here; and I'm terribly alone in the world. But Mr. Littlemore will tell you;

he will say he has known me for years. He will tell you whether he knows any reason—whether he knows anything against me. He's been wanting the chance; but he thought he couldn't begin himself. You see I treat you as an old friend, dear Mr. Littlemore. I will leave you with Sir Arthur. You will both excuse me." The expression of her face, turned towards Littlemore, as she delivered herself of this singular proposal, had the intentness of a magician who wishes to work a spell. She gave Sir Arthur another smile, and then she swept out of the room.

The two men remained in the extraordinary position that she had created for them; neither of them moved even to open the door for her. She closed it behind her, and for a moment there was a deep, portentous silence. Sir Arthur Demesne, who was very pale, stared hard at the carpet.

"I am placed in an impossible situation," Littlemore said at last, "and I don't imagine that you accept it any more than I do."

The baronet kept the same attitude; he neither looked up nor answered. Littlemore felt a sudden gush of pity for him. Of course he couldn't accept the situation; but, all the same, he was half sick with anxiety to see how this nondescript American, who was both so valuable and so superfluous, so familiar and so inscrutable, would consider Mrs. Headway's challenge.

"Have you any question to ask me?" Littlemore went on.

At this Sir Arthur looked up. Littlemore had seen the look before; he had described it to Waterville after the baronet came to call on him in Paris. There were other things mingled with it now—shame, annoyance, pride; but the great thing, the intense desire to *know*, was paramount.

"Good God! how can I tell him?" Littlemore exclaimed, to himself.

Sir Arthur's hesitation was probably extremely brief; but Littlemore heard the ticking of the clock while it lasted. "Certainly, I have no question to ask," the young man said in a voice of cool, almost insolent, surprise.

"Good day, then."

"Good day."

And Littlemore left Sir Arthur in possession. He expected to find Mrs. Headway at the foot of the staircase; but he quitted the house without interruption.

On the morrow, after lunch, as he was leaving the little mansion at Queen Anne's Gate, the postman handed him a letter. Littlemore opened and read it on the steps of his house, an operation which took but a moment. It ran as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Littlemore,—It will interest you to know that I am engaged to be married to Sir Arthur Demesne, and that our marriage is to

take place as soon as their stupid old Parliament rises. But it's not to come out for some days, and I am sure that I can trust meanwhile to your complete discretion.

"Yours very sincerely,

"NANCY H.

"P.S.—He made me a terrible scene for what I did yesterday, but he came back in the evening and made it up. That's how the thing comes to be settled. He won't tell me what passed between you—he requested me never to allude to the subject. I don't care; I was bound you should speak!"

Littlemore thrust this epistle into his pocket and marched away with it. He had come out to do various things, but he forgot his business for the time, and before he knew it had walked into Hyde Park. He left the carriages and riders to one side of him and followed the Serpentine into Kensington Gardens, of which he made the complete circuit. He felt annoyed, and more disappointed than he understood—than he would have understood if he had tried. Now that Nancy Beck had succeeded, her success seemed offensive, and he was almost sorry he had not said to Sir Arthur—"Oh, well; she was pretty bad, you know." However, now the thing was settled, at least they would leave him alone. He walked off his irritation, and before he went about the business he had come out for, had ceased to think about Mrs. Headway. He went home at six o'clock, and the servant who admitted him informed him in doing so that Mrs. Dolphin had requested he should be told on his return that she wished to see him in the drawing-room. "It's another trap!" he said to himself instinctively; but, in spite of this reflection, he went upstairs. On entering the apartment in which Mrs. Dolphin was accustomed to sit, he found that she had a visitor. This visitor, who was apparently on the point of departing, was a tall, elderly woman, and the two ladies stood together in the middle of the room.

"I'm so glad you've come back," said Mrs. Dolphin, without meeting her brother's eye. "I want so much to introduce you to Lady Demesne, and I hoped you would come in. Must you really go—won't you stay a little?" she added, turning to her companion; and without waiting for an answer, went on hastily—"I must leave you a moment—excuse me. I will come back!" Before he knew it, Littlemore found himself alone with Lady Demesne, and he understood that, since he had not been willing to go and see her, she had taken upon herself to make an advance. It had the queerest effect, all the same, to see his sister playing the same tricks as Nancy Beck!

"Ah, she must be in a fidget!" he said to himself as he stood before Lady Demesne. She looked delicate and modest, even timid, as far as a tall, serene woman who carried her head very well could look so; and she was such a different type from Mrs. Headway that his present vision of Nancy's triumph gave her by contrast something of the dignity of the vanquished. It made him feel sorry for her. She lost no time; she

went straight to the point. She evidently felt that in the situation in which she had placed herself, her only advantage could consist in being simple and business-like.

"I'm so glad to see you for a moment. I wish so much to ask you if you can give me any information about a person you know and about whom I have been in correspondence with Mrs. Dolphin. I mean Mrs. Headway."

"Won't you sit down?" asked Littlemore.

"No, I thank you. I have only a moment."

"May I ask you why you make this inquiry?"

"Of course I must give you my reason. I am afraid my son will marry her."

Littlemore was puzzled for a moment; that he felt sure then she was not yet aware of the fact imparted to him in Mrs. Headway's note. "You don't like her?" he said, exaggerating, in spite of himself, the interrogative inflexion.

"Not at all," said Lady Demesne, smiling and looking at him. Her smile was gentle, without rancour; Littlemore thought it almost beautiful.

"What would you like me to say?" he asked.

"Whether you think her respectable."

"What good will that do you? How can it possibly affect the event?"

"It will do me no good, of course, if your opinion is favourable. But if you tell me it is not, I shall be able to say to my son that the one person in London who has known her more than six months thinks her a bad woman."

This epithet, on Lady Demesne's clear lips, evoked no protest from Littlemore. He had suddenly become conscious of the need to utter the simple truth with which he had answered Rupert Waterville's first question at the *Théâtre Français*. "I don't think Mrs. Headway respectable," he said.

"I was sure you would say that." Lady Demesne seemed to pant a little.

"I can say nothing more—not a word. That's my opinion. I don't think it will help you."

"I think it will. I wished to have it from your own lips. That makes all the difference," said Lady Demesne. "I am exceedingly obliged to you." And she offered him her hand; after which he accompanied her in silence to the door.

He felt no discomfort, no remorse, at what he had said; he only felt relief. Perhaps it was because he believed it would make no difference. It made a difference only in what was at the bottom of all things—his own sense of fitness. He only wished he had remarked to Lady Demesne that Mrs. Headway would probably make her son a capital wife. But that, at least, would make no difference. He requested his sister, who

had wondered greatly at the brevity of his interview with Lady Demesne, to spare him all questions on this subject; and Mrs. Dolphin went about for some days in the happy faith that there were to be no dreadful Americans in English society compromising her native land.

Her faith, however, was short-lived. Nothing had made any difference; it was, perhaps, too late. The London world heard in the first days of July, not that Sir Arthur Demesne was to marry Mrs. Headway, but that the pair had been privately, and it was to be hoped, as regards Mrs. Headway, on this occasion indissolubly, united. Lady Demesne gave neither sign nor sound; she only retired to the country.

"I think you might have done differently," said Mrs. Dolphin, very pale, to her brother. "But of course everything will come out now."

"Yes, and make her more the fashion than ever!" Littlemore answered, with cynical laughter. After his little interview with the elder Lady Demesne, he did not feel himself at liberty to call again upon the younger; and he never learned—he never even wished to know—whether in the pride of her success she forgave him.

Waterville—it was very strange—was positively scandalised at this success. He held that Mrs. Headway ought never to have been allowed to marry a confiding gentleman; and he used, in speaking to Littlemore, the same words as Mrs. Dolphin. He thought Littlemore might have done differently.

He spoke with such vehemence that Littlemore looked at him hard—hard enough to make him blush.

"Did you want to marry her yourself?" his friend inquired. "My dear fellow, you're in love with her! That's what's the matter with you."

This, however, blushing still more, Waterville indignantly denied. A little later he heard from New York that people were beginning to ask who in the world was Mrs. Headway.

HENRY JAMES, JR.

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